

NATURE'S MYSTERIES

BY

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etc., etc.

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PREFACE.

THIS volume reproduces, with some modifications, a series of articles contributed during the last few months to the *Sun*, and republished in this form with the kind consent of the proprietors of that paper. My purpose has been to show readers unaccustomed to the study of what is commonly called "occult" science, how naturally the investigation of Nature's Mysteries along the lines of recognised scientific research, leads to, and blends with, that farther-reaching research which carries the inquirer beyond the limits of the physically manifested world. For this reason I began by picking up some threads of relatively familiar knowledge concerning the physical world, with the hope of showing how the deeper speculations of physics conduct the thinker, by imperceptible degrees and without any break of gauge, so to speak, to the regions of super-physical mystery, sometimes erroneously supposed to be permanently shut off from the approach of incarnate intelligence.

Once across the intangible frontier, I have found so much to describe that I have not dealt, in the later articles, which become the chapters of the present volume, with any other than the varied problems arising in connection with that kind of science which, until it grows more familiar to the cultivated classes generally, will be called "occult."

I have endeavoured, turning from one branch of such natural mystery to another, without attempting in any case to compile complete treatises of each, to give the reader a comprehensive glance over the wide domain of inquiry which lies before the scientific students of the future. As yet I freely grant that none of the branches of superphysical research dealt with in these pages have been truly formulated into sciences. The astrologer, the palmist, the mesmerist, who talk of the "sciences" they deal with, are so far misusing the term, because our knowledge of the laws lying behind these pursuits is too imperfect as yet to be described as scientific. But, on the other hand, the persons who do so describe them are by no means so deeply in error as the blind and more, or less stupid exponents of nineteenth-century prejudice who describe them as folly, imposture, or superstition. Whoever honestly investigates any of these irregular, inchoate sciences will soon be convinced that, however ill we may as yet understand the laws at work, there is a body of natural law with which each is related—bodies of law which, when better understood, will no doubt be often found to blend one into another, and which, in time, will be sufficiently cleared from the mists which still enshroud them, as to be embraced within the recognised scope of such organisations as the Royal Society and the British Association. The more advanced explorers will then be diving into mysteries of which the occultists of our generation are hardly so far cognisant, and in their turn will be ignored by the orthodoxy of the period as not worth the attention of serious men concerned with the practical certainties, as they will then be regarded, of clairvoyant research and astral records.

Meanwhile there is no hurry in connection with the evolution of human intelligence, and for each of us at present concerned with pursuits that win us more popular contempt

than fame, the time will come when these early lives of conflict with prevailing incredulity will be very amusing in the retrospect. It is difficult to convey to people, for whom the consciousness of other planes, the programme of future lives, and the drift of evolution, are empty phrases relating to what for them seems a black and impenetrable curtain of ignorance, how differently the current conditions of any given life are regarded by those who have come into possession of definite knowledge concerning the continuous life of the soul, and the continuity of our relations with the earthly theatre of our progress as well. But whoever attains, in greater or less degree, to a realisation of all this, finds it his business to help on others, so far as he is able, towards a comprehension thereof, and so books like this before me come to be written, not in the expectation that they will sweep away prejudice or enlighten the ignorance of the world at large to any great extent, but for the service of the readers—sufficiently numerous to be very well worth working for already, though few relatively to the population of the civilised world as things stand just now—whose eyes may be opened, to some extent, by familiarity with the realities lying behind various pursuits and inquiries still unfashionable with the multitude.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. WORKS AND WONDERS OF SCIENCE . . .	9
II. THE INFINITELY LITTLE . . .	20
III. SOME HIGHER FACULTIES OF CONSCIOUSNESS . . .	26
IV. THE AGE OF THE WORLD . . .	31
V. THE STORY OF ATLANTIS . . .	39
VI. THE BEQUESTS OF ATLANTIS . . .	47
VII. ASTRONOMY ANCIENT AND MODERN . . .	55
VIII. NEGLECTED PHASES OF ASTRONOMY . . .	63
IX. THE MYSTERY OF FORCE . . .	72
X. FORETELLING THE FUTURE . . .	80
XI. BEHIND THE SCENES OF NATURE . . .	89
XII. STRANGE TALES AND THEIR MEANING . . .	97
XIII. MORE STRANGE TALES . . .	105
XIV. "MIRACULOUS" (?) CURES . . .	113
XV. THE SENSITIVE AND THE "O.P." . . .	121
XVI. PHOTOGRAPHING THE UNSEEN . . .	128
XVII. THE DIVINING ROD . . .	136
XVIII. THE USE AND ABUSE OF SPIRITUALISM . . .	144
XIX. HOW NOT TO INVESTIGATE . . .	152
XX. PALMISTRY . . .	161
XXI. OCCULT POWERS . . .	169
XXII. THE PURPOSES OF OCCULT STUDY . . .	177

NATURE'S MYSTERIES.

CHAPTER I.

WORKS AND WONDERS OF SCIENCE.

PEOPLE who may not be inclined or able to make a special study of science are apt to credit those who are recognised as men of science with knowing a great deal more than they would claim, as knowledge, for themselves. The non-scientific person may entirely underrate the delicacy and minute precision of scientific work, but he is apt to overrate its grasp and scope. A correct appreciation of the beauty and magnitude of scientific achievement in one direction, and of the limitations that confront it in another, is very desirable on the part of anyone who, in a general way, is disposed to pay attention to the progress of invention, discovery, and research.

To show plainly what I mean by a definite example, I may point to what is known and what is not known about electricity. The extent to which students in that branch of science can now manipulate electricity is wonderful and splendid. We can make electric currents do almost any kind of work we care to set before them. We can make them carry messages or passengers; we can employ them to light houses and streets, or to cook dinners; we can teach them to

drive machinery, or to ring bells, and we can all the while measure their energies and quantities as accurately as though we were dealing with so much water or coals. Yet no man of science can tell us the first word of the answer to the question: What is electricity?

We can find out the rate at which electric impulses travel, and we know that this is identical with the speed of light, 186,000 miles a second. We know that currents differ very greatly among themselves in character, some being sharp and intense, and some bulky and feeble. We invent names for these attributes, and call the intensity "volt," and the volume "ampère," and then we go on to invent other names that relate to the different characters of different substances as conductors of electricity, and talk about "ohms" as measuring the resistance such substances oppose to the passage of electric currents; but all the while no one knows whether there is anything at all to be conducted, whether electricity is a fluid, like a gas, only much finer, or a mere vibration in that mysterious medium which pervades all space—the ether.

One might take other illustrations of the idea I want to enforce. We have all known since Newton's time a good deal about the way in which gravitation acts. Many accepted rules guide its invariable behaviour. It is a force that always bears a definite relation to the "mass" (for practical purposes, let us say the weight) of the bodies it affects, and to their distance from one another. But there the knowledge of the most advanced men of science stops short. No one can say a word when asked, What is gravitation? So again with the simplest experiences of everyday life. When you burn a lump of coal, what happens? We know that the various constituents of the coal enter into chemical combination with the oxygen of the atmosphere, but we do not in the least degree know why that process should involve the

development of light and heat. Combustion is the commonest, and yet, in some of its aspects, still amongst the most puzzling, phenomena of Nature.

Certainly, in saying this, I do not want to decry the achievements of science, nor even its methods, though these will probably undergo considerable modifications as time goes on; but it is important, in connection with the study of Nature, to realise both the range and limitations of science, because we are in presence of other attempts to investigate Nature besides those of the laboratory and observatory, and I shall have something to say, from time to time, about these, as well as about the achievements of ordinary science along the old familiar road. That which is commonly called science is exclusively "physical" science. It works with instruments made of metal, glass, and so on, and has accomplished work that may be fairly called sublime in its examination of what I will venture to call the outsides of things, but it always stops short in groping after a comprehension of their innermost essence.

Its failures are most obvious when we deal with any of the mysteries of Nature that are associated with life. The extent and minute precision of scientific knowledge concerning the mechanism of the human body are marvellous and admirable. Physiologists have found out all about the processes by which the human body is developed from the earliest stages of conception to the latest maturity of growth. We know how the muscles that move the body are themselves controlled by the nerves; how these are animated by energies proceeding from the brain; and we even know how some nerves convey orders, so to speak, from the brain to the muscles, and others report sensations from any part of the body to the brain.

We even know what parts of the brain are concerned with the movements of each limb, what parts do business with the interior functions of the body, like digestion or

blood circulation, and so forth; and if a man is afflicted with paralysis of some particular limb or muscle, we know exactly where to look for the injury to the brain that may have accounted for the defect. But with all this we have not got one step nearer comprehending the difference between the dead body and the living one. We have not even got one step towards comprehending the difference between the smallest living weed and its dead companion. Or, at all events, physical science has not accomplished one step in any such direction. Mysteries of that kind lie outside the domain of physical science. Workers in that field are no more to be blamed for not penetrating the mysteries of life than a painter of pictures is to be blamed for not understanding how to make a watch.

Inquiries concerning life and consciousness belong to the domain of what may be called superphysical science, and that, as far as the modern world is concerned at any rate, is a young branch of science still at the stage of observing facts or phenomena which it does not yet fully appreciate. Its conclusions are, so far, little better very often than guesses. Its theories are as yet vague and cloudy in their outlines. Still, it is a progressive branch of science, and is growing up by degrees. In illustration more exactly of what I mean, I will pass on to some broad considerations connected with the action of unseen intelligence.

Let us try for a moment to imagine a highly intelligent savage as clever as we are with his fingers and thoughts, but quite destitute of our acquired knowledge. Suppose some one gives him a watch, and he becomes desirous of understanding why the works move. Someone suggests that the whole machine is endowed with life that belongs to no one part in particular, but is an attribute of the whole combination. That idea leaves him

still dissatisfied. Someone else suggests that the spring contains the force and keeps the rest of the mechanism going. He proceeds to test this idea by taking the machine to pieces and examining the spring separately. Without it the other parts will not move, but it, by itself, has elasticity, and will give out this as often as it is wound up. Clearly the spring is the life principle of the watch. But what is the explanation of the elasticity of the spring? The intelligent savage must not be credited with any profound knowledge of molecular physics, so the ultimate source of the watch's life remains a mystery in spite of the dissection of its parts. There is an energy at work that no superficial examination of the spring will elucidate.

Now, can we work the same sort of experiment with a human being to see what keeps that machine going? At the first glance one might think that impossible. If you take a human body to pieces you cannot put it together again. You have destroyed it altogether. Or, at least, the ordinary surgeon takes that view; and certainly he is right in one way. You cannot cut up a human body with instruments and put it together again. But, strange as the idea may seem to people unfamiliar with the resources of super-physical science, you can, in certain ways, take the mainspring out of a human body and observe its action apart from the body, and ultimately put both body and mainspring together again. That is just what happens in certain kinds of mesmerism.

It is possible so to influence the body of a person peculiarly organised—specially sensitive—that the soul, its mainspring, is set free from it for a time and can act independently of it—can be conscious independently of it, which is the all-important point to be considered. Meanwhile, the body is not conscious. You can prick it with needles and it does not feel, give it ammonia to smell and

it does not cough—indeed, more reckless experiments have been tried on persons in the mesmeric state, and their flesh may be burned without their feeling anything; but such experiments as that are deeply to be condemned, because the body is thus injured, even though it does not feel pain at the time, so that when the soul comes back it finds its tenement out of repair.

A result of huge importance is reached by such experiments—equally well reached by those which are innocent as by those which are blameworthy—namely, that the mainspring of the human creature is a separable something which can exist in full consciousness apart from the body, and, when apart from the body, is quite indifferent as to what happens to its deserted tenement. In short, the survival of the soul of a man, after what is commonly called his death, is all but demonstrable by means of mesmeric experiments—not yet, I must confess, within the reach of everyone who would like to try them, any more than the Lick telescope is within the reach of everyone who would like to look through it, but nevertheless within the reach of special inquirers in that line fortunately situated in various ways; and their work has been duly recorded for the advantage of all who are willing to become students of their department of science at second-hand. After all, every student in any department of science has to be content with second-hand knowledge of about nineteen-twentieths of all the facts he works with.

In just the same way that the discovery of the mainspring of the watch left the inquirer in that case unable to explain why it was elastic, so the discovery of the soul as an entity separable from the body does not explain its consciousness. To comprehend that in some measure, we have to go deeper into the mysteries of Nature than mesmeric processes will take us, but an immense step has been accomplished when we have discovered the mainspring.

The trouble, so far, in connection with superphysical science is that it inflames the interest of a good many people who work at it in a very unscientific fashion. In this matter of trying to find out something more about the real nature of life and consciousness than can be learned from the surgeon and the physiologist, everyone eager in the pursuit is keen to find out whether it is possible to communicate with souls that have passed out of the body, not merely for a time, as in the case of the mesmerised subject, but finally and completely by reason of the death of the body. And the fact that it is possible sometimes to do this is as certain as the fact that it is possible to get to the top of Mont Blanc, but the investigation is surrounded with difficulty, and it is so easy to make mistakes in the interpretation of all that happens when you set out on that inquiry; and, above all, there are, unfortunately, so many people lying in wait for those who engage in that inquiry, and for sordid motives ready to impose on their ill-trained understandings, that the inquiry leads as often to disappointment as to success.

Of course, I am now referring to the whole volume of research that goes by the name of Spiritualism. It is as certain as the occasional appearance of comets in the sky, that spiritual *séances* are sometimes—very often—attended by invisible beings who are actually the departed souls of people who once lived in the body. Persons who deny that are as ignorant as they are silly. They are ignorant of the fact that scores—hundreds, indeed—of highly-cultured people bear testimony to their experience in that matter, and they are silly in supposing that their trumpery little prepossessions as to what is probable and what is improbable are to be set against the positive evidence of others at variance with those prepossessions. Also they are marvellously silly in supposing that because they may

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go to some spiritualistic *séance* and see reason to think the proceedings are imposture, therefore the proceedings at all other *séances* must be imposture too. There are forged bank-notes in the world, no doubt, but that does not militate against the fact that there are also others which are genuine. But, on the other hand, while the rank disbelievers in spiritualism are foolish to an exasperating degree, the devotees of that pursuit are grievously unscientific in their methods, as a rule. They are on the threshold of a mighty science, but they too often think themselves in possession of advanced knowledge. They are, in comparison, much at the stage in which students of electricity found themselves when they discovered that by rubbing amber it was possible to make it attract bits of paper, or when Galvani found that by touching a frog's leg with the wires of a voltaic pile it was possible to make the muscles jerk.

Spiritualism has certainly shown, what, indeed, could have been ascertained in other ways, that the human soul survives the death of the body. But it has not explained the destinies of the human soul after death, because people who pass away only learn about these by degrees, and while they are in a position to communicate with friends still in the flesh, they have not gone very far on their ultimate journey, and have not acquired any knowledge concerning its later stages. It is possible, by other means than those of the spiritualist, to become acquainted with the main features of some of those later stages, and, as opportunity may serve, along the pathway of these pages I hope to make some of the results so obtained intelligible to my readers; but for the moment I am more concerned with the attempt to show how Nature's mysteries are all interwoven one with another, and how the beautiful mental training of exact science relating to physical Nature is an indispensable preparation for an

intelligent examination of the mysteries belonging to the side of Nature that is superphysical.

The mysteries of physical and of superphysical Nature are rich in resemblances. One reason why it is impossible to study the invisible world of consciousness properly without a groundwork of knowledge relating to the visible aspect of it, is that these analogies or resemblances are so helpful and suggestive at every turn. You must have stores of them available for use as they may be required. And a very important group of physical mysteries available to suggest analogies in regard to higher things are those which have to do with chemical affinity. Here again we are in presence of a multitude of facts that chemists have observed and classified, and with which they can work to any extent, just as the electrician can work with volts and ampères, though he does not in the least degree know what he is talking about when he uses those terms.

The tendency of the various chemical elements to unite with one another is variable, up and down the scale, for each in turn. That is to say, any given element of the whole series has a supreme preference for some other one. Put it under suitable conditions, in presence of all, and it will unite with the one of its supreme preference. If that one is absent, there will be one among the remaining elements that it will prefer to unite with rather than with any of the rest, and so on to the end of the series. Take away the best-beloved and the second best-beloved, and the original element will have a third choice. There are surly elements of very recent discovery that will not have anything to say to any others at all. The gas "argon" appears to be such an one. It has no affinities. The gas "fluorine," on the other hand, is so madly possessed of passionate affinities in all directions, that

it is hardly possible to keep it separate from others—to “isolate” it, as the phrase goes. This has only been done by the splendid ingenuity of some chemists within the last few years.

Now, all the metals have, in varying degrees, affinities for oxygen. Oxygen, in fact, is the most universally beloved of the elements, and every process of combustion is a process of uniting something or other with oxygen. But we do not generally think of the metals as bodies which unite in this way or “burn” very easily. When iron rusts it is really burning slowly, but that process does not look like burning. Some metals, on the other hand, burn very easily and obviously. Magnesium, for example, burns, as every photographer knows, with a wonderfully brilliant light, and unites eagerly with oxygen if we give it the chance. Truth to tell, many metals which, at the first glance, do not seem very combustible, will burn freely enough if we give them their own particular favourite chance; thus, lead will take fire in the air spontaneously if it is reduced to sufficiently fine powder.

But no mechanical means would powder it finely enough. You have to get it in an extra fine powder by certain chemical devices I need not stop to describe, and then it will burst into red heat and unite with the oxygen of the air as soon as it is shaken out of the vessel in which it is prepared. But the newest, and in some respects the most interesting, discovery that has been made about the combustibility of metals has reference to aluminium. That metal will not burn if you try to set fire to it with a match, as magnesium will, but give it its favourite chance, and it burns with an intensity that is something perfectly marvellous.

What it cares for is not loose oxygen as we find it in the air. Like perverse human beings, in some cases it is only

keen upon getting what it wants, if it can take that something away from somebody else. For no mere innocent matrimonial alliance with the free oxygen of the atmosphere has it any taste, but puts it in rivalry with some other metal that has already got an atom of oxygen united with it, and the aluminium will seize on that atom and tear it away from the other metal with such fury that the heat engendered by the rupture is greater than any other known heat, greater even than the heat engendered by the electric furnace.

In less fanciful terms I will describe exactly how the experiment is conducted. You must get your aluminium, to begin with, in a very fine powder, though it need not be so fine as the lead in the other experiment I just spoke of. Then you mix that powder very intimately with another powder consisting of the oxide of some other metal, say manganese, which, when once united with oxygen, is very loth to part company from it. Then you must start the process of combustion by peculiar means. You cannot set fire to the combination with a match, but you must put on the top a little of another mixture—aluminium powder and barium oxide, which you can start burning with a match. Then, when this is set going, it starts the manganese mixture, and the combustion is something marvellously beautiful and brilliant.

As I say, the heat engendered is so extraordinary that the new combination, oxide of aluminium, which is simply clay, is melted to a liquid state. If the crucible in which the operation is carried on is large enough, and the quantities of metal used considerable enough, the melted clay can be poured out and used for appropriate purposes—for welding rails, for example—but I need not go into the ramifications of the process. Scientifically its interest has to do with the peculiar way in which the affinities concerned are thus enabled to operate.

CHAPTER II.

THE INFINITELY LITTLE.

A NEW impulse has been given to scientific thought within the last few months by the researches of Professor J. J. Thompson in connection with certain particles of all but inconceivable minuteness which he describes as "bodies smaller than atoms." Now, an atom, in the scientific sense of the term, has generally been thought of as the smallest particle of matter that could exist; therefore, on the face of things, it is a sort of joke to talk of anything smaller. But we are gradually coming to know a good deal more about the constitution of matter than was known when the current language of science first came into use.

An atom is no longer regarded as simply the smallest particle of matter that can exist, but as the smallest particle of any particular kind of matter that can exist as such. That is to say, an atom of oxygen gas, or an atom of iron, is the smallest particle of oxygen or iron that can exist, but it is suspected that each such atom may really be built up of a number of very much smaller atoms of something else. We do not know what that something else may be, but the fundamental atom, the "primordial" atom, as it is sometimes called, according to that conjecture, would be the same in all cases. The difference, then, between the atom of oxygen and the atom of iron would depend upon the structure of the atom, and not upon the material of

which it was made. To get the idea clearly before the mind, we may think of the primordial atom as a brick.

With the same sort of bricks you may build a great variety of houses. Each sort of house, to follow out that illustration, might be regarded as a chemical element. In the earlier stages of scientific thinking, a chemical element was thought of as something that existed as such from the beginning of creation. The elements were conceived to be the materials of which the world was made. Now the most advanced thinkers take quite a different view of the subject. The "primordial" atom was the material of which the world was made, and the first business at its making was to make the chemical elements. It is very interesting to endeavour to realise the whole process in imagination, and not so difficult as it might seem at the first glance. But all I want to emphasise for the moment is that there is nothing absurd in talking of bodies smaller than atoms, when we realise that by atom we mean the atom of some one or other of the chemical elements.

In dealing with the subject of atoms, it is very difficult for a writer acquainted with the view of the atom which clairvoyant research has enabled the occult student to take, to keep the orthodox physicist's theory of the atom distinct from that of the modern occultist. Long before Professor Thompson's research was carried out, and still further back than the recent address of Professor Rucker at the British Association meeting at Glasgow, articles were published in theosophical periodicals, making the relationship between the atom of physical matter and the primordial atom quite intelligible. Towards this view the most advanced physicists of the day are steadily creeping. Professor Rucker has crept so far that he is really almost in touch with the theosophical explanation. That, let me briefly explain, is, in effect, that the primordial atom—primordial as regards the physical

world—is nothing less or different from ether in its atomic state. Combinations of that atom, too simple to be yet recognisable as physical matter, constitute a variety of the ether that the ordinary scientist has not yet become acquainted with; but in relatively complicated structures the etheric atoms build up the atoms of the substances known as chemical elements. So much is more or less appreciated by the physical science of the day as interpreted by Professor Rucker at Glasgow, and the Professor himself goes so far as to recognise that the ultimate atom, as he regards it, is ultraphysical. Only in its combinations does it enter the domain of physical matter. So far he is right according to the occult view, but he has not yet realised that his ultimate atom, floating, as he seems to regard it, in the ether, is the ether itself. Probably that idea will soon recommend itself to ordinary scientific speculation, but for some time to come that speculation will probably lag behind the knowledge already attained by occult investigation, to the effect that the etheric atom itself is a complicated structure built up of the still more inconceivably minute atoms of an altogether different plane of Nature. That is the fact—occultists appreciate it, and the symmetry of Nature is only realised when that fact is taken into account. The mystery as to the origin of matter thus recedes to infinite distance, but that does not make the nearer processes of its development any the less interesting.

Now, I want to convey an idea of how small the atoms of the chemical elements may probably be. Great mathematicians like Lord Kelvin have worked at this problem, and they come to fairly similar conclusions. Lord Kelvin somewhere illustrates the conclusion by saying that if a drop of water were magnified till it became the size of the earth—all the atoms of which it is composed being magnified in the same proportion—then the atoms would be

probably smaller than cricket balls, but larger than small shot. Something between those two sizes !

That suggestion helps the imagination, but we only dazzle it if we talk of the figures concerned. The gases that compose the air we breathe consist, of course, of atoms. In a cubic centimetre of air (a centimetre is a little less than half an inch) there are thirty trillions of gaseous atoms. A trillion is a million billion, and a billion is a million million. Now, a million alone is a number almost beyond the reach of imagination. If you began at six o'clock on Monday morning to count seconds, and kept on day and night without a moment's intermission till Saturday evening at six o'clock, you would only have counted half a million seconds, not quite that. If anyone offered you a million sovereigns on condition that you should count them out before you ate, drank, or slept, it would not pay you to accept the offer. And yet, in a little quantity of air, such as you take in hundreds at a breath, there are millions of millions of millions of atoms.

Now about those things which are smaller than atoms. They are radiated or thrown off from the electrical apparatus which generates the much-talked-of Röntgen ray. Indeed, the mysterious influence which bears that name, and which passes freely through our flesh, and is only partially stopped by our bones, appears, according to Professor J. J. Thompson, to consist of those minute atoms. I am not going to attempt an explanation of the mathematical reasoning that shows them to be smaller than the atoms that make up the air, for example, but that reasoning is very strong.

It rests upon highly-refined calculations concerning the amounts of electric energy they carry, and not merely on the facts I am going to speak of; but it is clear that they are much smaller than the air particles, because they pass freely through the glass vessels in which they are generated, and

which are absolutely impervious to air. If a glass vessel is free from cracks and properly sealed up after the air has been exhausted from it, it will remain in that condition for ever. No air will leak into it. If the glass has pores (which it must have, though that is an idea not easily grasped), they are too small to let the atoms of air through, but the atoms that carry the electric energy slip through like water through a sieve. Think of a net-work, the meshes of which are about an inch across. Such a net would prevent the passage of cricket balls, but would allow small shot to run through quite easily.

This is just what happens with the glass. Its pores are too small to let the air atoms through, but those of the new kind run through freely, and not alone escape in this way from the vessel in which they are generated, but pass freely into any other in their way, as can be shown by experiments by which they are made to produce obvious effects in a second vessel also hermetically sealed as regards the passage of air. There is not really so much novelty in Professor Thompson's discovery as most of the scientific magnates who listened to him at the Royal Institution may probably have imagined. Nature's mysteries are explored in many different ways.

Science, like an army on the march, advances along the main highway. In front and on both sides irregular troops dash about in unknown regions, wasting their energies fruitlessly very often, but sometimes getting unexpected triumphs over the enemy in a way that would have been impossible for the main body. Unhappily, however, in the case of scientific progress, the main body does not regard the auxiliaries as friends or allies, but is very jealous of them, and disinclined to accept any help at their hands. In other words, orthodox men of science are apt to neglect knowledge acquired in any other than their own way, and thus have

shut their eyes to a great deal that has been going on in the world of late years in unorthodox departments of research.

The truth is, that precise knowledge concerning the infinitely little will only be obtained when science accepts the assistance of methods which hitherto it has been loftily inclined to scorn. Researches concerning the nature of the atom can only be guesswork and inference, until certain human faculties, at present only studied by those who are confessedly detached from the main body of scientific explorers, are regularly adopted by all. It will be convenient at this stage of my exposition to pass on to the consideration of the faculties, from the use of which the future methods of science will be developed.

CHAPTER III.

SOME HIGHER FACULTIES OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

SOME mysteries of Nature that were scouted and hooted at fifty years ago as the empty pretences of fraud and imposture, are already recognised as realities and worthy of serious attention.

Others, of which the importance has not yet been generally allowed, will establish their claims in due time. Mesmerism, for example, which was ridiculed in the middle of the past century as though it were nonsense and superstition, is acknowledged on all hands now to be a fact in Nature, though few people understand it properly as yet, except those who have been at work with it for many years. So with what is called "thought-transference," the power some people have, if they are specially gifted in that direction, of becoming aware, without being told in any ordinary way, of what some other person is thinking.

That used to be ridiculed as nonsense by orthodox scientific people until the Society for Psychical Research carried out such a long series of experiments on the subject, and obtained such conclusive results, that now, if anyone says he does not believe in thought-transference, he merely shows his ignorance of established truth. A great many other branches of inquiry hitherto carried on by the irregular auxiliaries of science will gradually come within the area of recognised work. Of that we may feel sure, because enough

has been learned about Nature already to show that it is rich in mysteries that never can be investigated by means of instruments in a laboratory. There are forces far too subtle to influence galvanometers and electroscopes, which are, nevertheless, susceptible of investigation, if specially gifted people use their inborn faculties in the right way.

I shall come back directly to show how some such faculties have been employed to anticipate Professor Thompson's discovery of bodies smaller than atoms, but it will be as well to describe first what kind of faculty has been used (incidentally, among other uses) for that purpose. All possible methods of investigating the mysteries of Nature may be divided up into two great groups: the physical methods and the superphysical methods. That is to say, we may use microscopes, telescopes, spectroscopes, and all the other instruments that can be made by the optician, or we may use abnormal, unusual, human faculties. Of course, where they can be employed, the physical instruments are much the more convenient, but they are limited in their range. Think of a microscope, for example. With the best that can be made you can see the minute bacteria of disease about which so much is said in the present day. Some of their germ cells are no more than 1-5000th of an inch in diameter. You can see them in a good microscope, but one of them would be an elephant compared to one of the molecules or atoms that make up a drop of water.

Mathematics and indirect experiment may enable us to find out the size of the water molecule, but we shall never see it with any physical instrument. But such things can be seen by the "clairvoyant" faculty of persons peculiarly gifted. As the human race improves, such people will become more numerous than they are at present, but already they are numerous enough to enable students of "occult"

science to be quite sure of their existence, and to compare their observations one with another.

That phrase, by-the-way, "occult," merely means something extra-mysterious for the time being. The few people who possessed some knowledge of electricity in the days of ancient Egypt would have called that occult science. A few generations hence there will be nothing occult about thought-transference, or clairvoyance, but, for the moment, the laws governing those faculties are still hidden from us to so great an extent, that the study of such matters lies still in the department of occult science.

The phrase "clairvoyance" means, of course, no more than clear seeing—seeing, that is to say, with the eyes of the mind, in some mysterious fashion, which has nothing to do with optics, but, nevertheless, is a *bona-fide* perception of actual things. The idea was so strange to the early inquirers who first dropped upon it, that they may well have been excused for thinking it supernatural. And people in the present day who are still under the influence of the thinking which prevailed in the scientific world fifty years ago, do not believe in the supernatural, so they put aside all they chance to hear about clairvoyance as so much humbug and nonsense. But they might as well put aside the Transvaal War as humbug and nonsense, on the ground that they have not taken part in it. Certainly I do not want them to change their habits of mind so far as to believe in the "supernatural." There cannot be any such thing, because whatever *is*, comes within the domain of Nature.

But the truth of the matter is, that a vast variety of things, of which nobody as yet suspects the existence, come within that domain, and as we make acquaintance with them one by one, each at the first glance looks so unfamiliar that we think it must be fraud, nonsense, hallucination. Clairvoyance is a faculty as old as the world. There are perfectly well-

authenticated stories about it in ancient history, but no evidence of that sort will make people believe what they do not want to believe, so I will come to more recent investigations. One of the most patient and careful investigators who have written on this subject is Dr Gregory, author of a book called *Animal Magnetism*, published in the middle of the century. He was lucky enough to meet with a good many people who were endowed with the necessary faculties, and willing to let him experiment with them. In his day it seems to have been taken for granted that clairvoyance was a faculty that could only be exercised when people were in the mesmeric state, so all Dr Gregory's subjects were first mesmerised, and then employed to look at things that could not be seen with their physical eyes.

For example, he would get a bagful of nuts, each made up for children's parties, with a printed motto inside. Anyone present would take one of these nuts out of the bag at random. It would be given to the "sensitive," or clairvoyant, and he (or she) would read the motto, or, anyhow, tell correctly what it was. Then, before everyone present, the nut would be cracked, and the clairvoyant reading verified. These demonstrations were very neat and satisfactory, because they precluded the possibility that the motto could be read by thought-transference. Nobody present knew what any particular nut contained.

Many French experimentalists in the middle of the century entangled their researches with attempts to foresee the future by help of clairvoyance. It does not follow that because a peculiarly-gifted person may be able to see what *is* at a distance in space, he may be able to see what only *may be* at a distance in time. All the same, a great deal of interesting information on the subject of true clairvoyance is to be found in the French literature of mesmerism; and though we do not understand much yet about the laws

which govern the exercise of this faculty, everyone who has the patience to become, in even a moderate degree, a student of occult science, knows that such a faculty exists. Without stopping now, however, to relate personal experiences, I want to explain that clairvoyance is the power by means of which our comprehension of the innermost minutiae of Nature will ultimately be extended far beyond the limits set by the imperfections of physical instruments.

We shall never see an atom of carbon or oxygen by means of microscopes, but we shall be able to examine their structure and composition by means of clairvoyant faculties turned in that direction, for size is no embarrassment to the eyes of the mind. The smallest things in Nature are as visible to that sense as the medium-sized things that suit our common eyesight, and the clairvoyant sight can be no more embarrassed by magnitude in the other direction. Astronomical distances are as well within its focus as those which we can measure with our hands.

CHAPTER IV.

THE AGE OF THE WORLD.

"My friends," said a simple-minded preacher once in the hearing of one of my friends, "this world is very old. It is six thousand years old!" Of course, the good man thought he had Scriptural assurance in support of that estimate; but the progress of knowledge has induced us, not to treat Scriptural statements with disrespect, but to read them in a new way, and thus all educated people in the present age are well aware that the planet on which we live has been slowly brought to its present degree of perfection during a great many millions of years, and that the six thousand of our primitive ancestral belief is rather a phase of the present time than a period that can be treated, in any comprehensive sense, as the past.

On the other hand, though we all know that geological evidence not only proves the enormous antiquity of the earth, but makes it certain that man existed upon it many millions of years ago (human skulls having been found in strata that must have been formed as long ago as that), we have no direct literary evidence of human activity extending further back than a few thousand years before Christ. European records are all very recent. Those of Egypt go back much further, but the dates to which we assign the earliest buildings, sculpture, and inscriptions are, to a great extent, matters of speculation.

A fragment of an old Egyptian history, the bulk of which has been lost, gives us a catalogue of kings and dynasties covering a period that has been variously estimated at from 3500 to 5000 years before Christ; but everyone admits that remains apparently associated with the earliest part of this period are of a kind that must have been preceded by long ages of civilisation. The tendency of archæologists, however, has been to ignore what cannot be demonstrated, so students of this subject have, for the most part, drifted into the habit of assuming that civilisation on earth began with the known beginnings of Egyptian civilisation, and that if we go back behind 5000 B.C., we have to think of mankind as in a savage condition. The men who lived millions of years ago, and whose skulls and flint implements are to be found in geological deposits that cannot have a less antiquity than that, are generally thought of as a mere primitive race living in caves and unacquainted with the use of metals.

None the less does every fresh discovery or legitimate inference tend to bring a larger allowance of past ages into continuous relation with the historic period. Professor Flinders Petrie, who has done a great deal of patient work in Egypt, and has lately given a course of lectures at the Royal Institution on the prehistoric remains he has discovered, helps himself to another two thousand years, more or less, to account for their existence. The things themselves—pottery, flint implements, and sculpture—do not afford any clue to the date at which they were made, but Professor Petrie thinks that the known rate at which the River Nile deposits mud, does afford such a clue. Egypt, as an inhabited country, is the creation of the River Nile. Its cultivatable soil has been spread over the bed rock by the inundations of a vast series of ages, and if you measure the depth of the deposit, you get a time limit within which

every phase of Egyptian existence must have been included. Thus, 7000 years before Christ seems to him the limit within which the complete history of Egypt must be compressed. I propose to show reason why we need not submit to those narrow limits in considering the past civilisation of Egypt, and why it is desirable to attack the problem in quite a different way from that adopted by Professor Petrie, if we set out in search of general conclusions concerning the antiquity of civilised mankind on earth, irrespective of any particular area within which such civilisation may, at any given period, have fermented.

Whenever this investigation is seriously undertaken by the scientific world, it must turn round the great problem of Atlantis. I have said that we have no literary records concerning the remote past, but that remark may be qualified. We have none that are as yet universally accepted as trustworthy, but Plato has left us some account, flavoured, it is true, with obviously fabulous details, concerning the existence, at a period long anterior to the earliest known dynasties of the Egyptian catalogue, of a great island or continent situated in the middle of what is now the Atlantic Ocean. He got his information from Egyptian priests. Till recently the whole story was treated as a fable, but modern research has gone far, by ordinary methods, to establish the fact that such a continent as he describes did really exist at one time. Of course, there is nothing at variance with accepted scientific views in that belief.

Geologists freely admit the broad principle that most of the land which is dry at the present time was once under sea water, and presumably, therefore, that a great deal of the present ocean bed was once dry land. At the Edinburgh meeting of the British Association, Professor Lapworth spoke of the "secular undulations of the earth's

crust," which alternately, in periods of unknown duration, changed the whole face of geography. The only reason why the existence of Atlantis is not universally recognised is that, as yet, we are not supposed to have sufficient proof of its existence. So far, only some students of the subject think the proof, along ordinary lines, sufficient and complete. Some of the scientific men connected with the ocean surveys of the *Challenger* are disposed to regard the configuration of the Atlantic bed as fully establishing the Atlantis theory.

Donnelly, the American writer, brings forward a mass of testimony to show that the ancient beliefs, the artistic work, and the natural phenomena—the plants and animals—of Mexico and the Mediterranean basin had a common origin, which could only have been possible if at one time those parts of the world were in touch with each other along land communications, instead of being separated by great expanses of ocean as they are now. And since Donnelly wrote his book, some overwhelming testimony has been forthcoming to confirm the Atlantean story. But before I come to that, it will be convenient to describe how it comes to pass that students of occult science have rushed on enormously in advance of investigation along commonplace channels of research, in reference to the conditions of the world's civilisation at the time when Atlantis was in full life and vigour.

The faculty of clairvoyance, of which I have already spoken in reference to the power it gives to some of its most gifted exponents of examining the structure of atoms far too small for any microscopic investigation, is equally applicable to the investigation of the world's history in long past ages. A time will most certainly come when this wonderful power will be recognised as the most potent instrument of research which science can employ. As yet it is exercised in perfection by only a few persons known to me, but within

the Theosophical connection there are several sufficiently endowed and developed—for the faculty requires not merely a natural gift, but great perseverance and devotion to the task, for its effective culture—to provide for the comparison of observations one with another, to eliminate occasional errors, and to fill up detail when the problem in hand has to do with the investigation of some long past period.

In that way the modern devotees of occult science have at last put together such a mass of information relating to the Atlantean period, that we really know much more about it than, for instance, about the so-called historical period of Egyptian civilisation. And we have been made acquainted, in connection with this research, with the actual dates at which great changes in the configuration of the earth's geography have taken place. • Ordinary geology, as I have said, makes it certain that such changes have taken place, but it does not tell us when they happened. Clairvoyant research does tell us when the changes occurred, and, more than this, gives us actual maps of the earlier configurations.

“The Story of Atlantis,” the results of clairvoyant investigation into that most interesting period of the world's history, has been published in a book bearing that title. The whole narrative is too elaborate and fascinating in its interest to be dealt with in detail in this article, which has necessarily been concerned with collateral matters, but I want especially to explain how the knowledge we occult students possess concerning Atlantis clears up questions connected with the early history of Egypt that would be quite unmanageable in any other way. • Knowing how the geographical changes have been going on, we can reconcile the 9000-year limit (reckoning back from the present time), which Professor Petrie assigns to the whole history of Egypt, with the fact, of which in other

ways we are quite equally sure, that the grandest civilisation of Egypt was flourishing many tens of thousands of years before the country entered upon that 9000-year period. That period did not, in real truth, represent its growth and development, but merely its gradual decay.

Once upon a time—I will go into more exact detail later—land stretched almost uninterruptedly right across the region which is now the Atlantic Ocean, from the land we now call Mexico—the extreme westerly limit—to the northern shores of what is now Africa (the southern part of Africa had not then as yet come into existence), and so on right across what is now Egypt (there was no Red Sea then) to what is now Asia. The land, in fact, at the time I am speaking of made a huge belt round the earth. There was no North or South America, no Europe, no South Africa. Much later on, through successive changes that I will not stop now to describe, some approximation to the present condition of affairs was reached, but still there existed in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean an island—the remnant of the original vast continent of Atlantis—and this island was about as big in area as all modern Europe, without Russia. The Red Sea had been invented by that time (it was the result of changes that took place about 80,000 years ago), and so matters remained without any great further alteration until about 11,500 years ago.

That was the period during which the grand civilisation of Egypt was actually in progress. Why have its traces not been more definitely identified? Because at the date last mentioned, 11,500 years ago, the latest of the great cataclysmic convulsions that have from time to time altered the configuration of the earth took place. The vast island constituting the remains of Atlantis subsided with terrific suddenness, and the sea, which then covered what is now the desert of Sahara, was driven eastward so as to com-

pletely deluge the land of Egypt. The great pyramid, already in existence (modern archæology is utterly mistaken as to the date of its construction), was for a time under water. Lower Egypt was obliterated as a region of land, and spent a good many years as so much sea-bed. All traces of the old civilisation disappeared except as regards some of the temples, which, like the great pyramid, are really prediluvian, and when the next change took place, which elevated, to some extent, the whole of Northern Africa and shouldered off the waters of the Saharan Sea, leaving that region to dry up and become a desert, then the Nile resumed business as a river channel, and set to work to make a new Egypt by the deposition of fresh mud. It is this, its latter-day task, that the modern archæologist treats as though it had occupied the whole of past time.

And now, having stated what *did* occur—as occult students ascertain by surer methods than the guesses of archæology—let me, in conclusion for the present, show how some commonplace testimony of the ordinary kind has lately cropped up to vindicate occult research in reference to the latest period of Atlantean history and the final disappearance of the last remaining island. Mexico, as I have said, has from immense antiquity been habitable land. A French archæologist, Dr Le Plongeon, has been at work there for many years. He has written books about his discoveries, and he has been the first person to decipher the Mexican hieroglyphics (which differ from those of Egypt). In 1893 Mr E. J. Howell, in the course of a lecture before the Society of Arts, recounted the contents of letters he had received from Dr Le Plongeon concerning his then recent work. He had succeeded in translating a certain manuscript known to archæologists as the Troano MS. It had never before been deciphered, but Le Plongeon found it to contain a straightforward narrative of

the submergence of Atlantis. It is in itself an ancient Mexican manuscript of immense antiquity, and it says that the catastrophe took place "8060 years before the writing of this book." Ten countries, it says, were torn asunder in the convulsion, and sank with their 64,000,000 inhabitants. The date given, it will be seen, fairly well corresponds with that obtained by clairvoyant research, and it is not creditable to the ordinary non-occult students of the bygone history and past evolution of our race, that Le Plongeon's great discovery should, so far, have excited so little attention.

The real, grand, early civilisation of Egypt was introduced by migrations of enterprising colonists from the great Atlantean continent long before the contraction of that continent to the dimensions of the island which lasted till 11,500 years ago. Everything, in fact, in any part of the ancient world had an Atlantean origin, just as a few thousand years hence everything then existing about the world in the shape of civilisation will necessarily be recognised as having had a European origin. Nobody can begin to understand the old world, or the beginnings of the civilisation in the midst of which we live, until he has obtained a comprehensive grasp of the state of mankind in the Atlantean period. Atlantis is the key to all knowledge concerning the past history and evolutionary progress of our race; and in the next chapter I propose to go on with this subject, and to show how a rich and varied civilisation spread over large portions of the earth, not merely a few thousand, but even a million, years ago.

CHAPTER V.

THE STORY OF ATLANTIS.

AMONG all the investigations that have been undertaken by the students of occult science with the view of enabling us better to understand the world in which we live, few have been more important than that which has presented us with a fairly complete and coherent picture of the civilisation that prevailed on the earth in long past ages, before the slow processes of geological change had fashioned the continents into the shape with which we are now familiar. Apart from the human interest of the story thus unveiled, it puts an entirely new complexion (for those to whom the crudities of mediæval theology have hitherto stood in the way of truthful conceptions concerning the methods of Divine activity) on the whole theory of creation.

Everyone in these days has been made familiar with the idea of evolution as the method by which higher forms of vegetable and animal life are gradually developed from those which come first in the order of time. But, while we know that biologists require millions of years to account for the evolution of one species of animal from another, most people have been idly content to think of the transition from the primitive savage of the "stone age," as it is vaguely called, to the intellectual perfection that we find developed in ancient Greece, let us say, as accomplished within the one or two thousand years, which are all that our modern

historical knowledge provides for as the period of civilisation anterior to ancient Greece. Millions of years are assigned to the natural processes that are required to differentiate the body of a sheep, let us say, from the body of the preceding animal, whatever that may have been in the order of development ; but even professed evolutionists carelessly suppose that the mind of a man is something that can grow up like a mushroom in a relatively brief interval.

The blunder is due to the habit people have got into of looking merely at the outside of things, at the mere physical world around us, without suspecting that that is only *one* aspect of Nature. It is only the occultist, so far, who realises that the unseen aspects of Nature are themselves the result of a gradual evolution, and that changes of condition in the human soul are as much the result of evolutionary growth as the changes in the condition of its bodily organism. Later on I propose to discuss some of the conditions that regulate growth of that sort—amongst the most fascinating of all the mysteries that are half revealed and half concealed by the outward circumstances of our terrestrial existence ; but in all natural study it is well to begin by getting a grasp, as complete as possible, of the *facts* we have to deal with, putting off till later the broad inferences from these which give us a comprehensive theory of life.

I have shown already how ancient tradition suggests that inhabited land once existed where the Atlantic Ocean now spreads its watery curtain over the past ; that ocean soundings tend to confirm that tradition ; that the accepted principles of geology are in harmony with it ; and that archæological discoveries in Mexico have gone far to establish it on a foundation of recorded certainty. I may add one little bit of testimony from the experience of a friend who has travelled a great deal in Mexico. At various places about that country, in forests and primæval wildernesses,

traces have been found of an old road—a solidly-built causeway of stone—which appeared to run from some place in the interior of the country to the seashore at the end of the peninsula of Yucatan. Beyond the coast lie certain islands. On these also traces of the old road have been found, as also in the shallow transparent waters between them and the mainland.

The road is as plain an assurance as though it were a record in writing, that at some former time there was a civilised inhabited region in the direction towards which that road points. The region is under water now, but once upon a time it was to the world at large what Europe is now—the home of the most advanced civilisation of the period. Clairvoyant research has enabled us to recall the general features of that time and even more—many details of the social, industrial, and scientific characteristics of the time. For let it be understood that there is no limit to the power of clairvoyant research except that which affects the capacity of any given clairvoyant investigator to exercise the power. The memory of Nature, so to speak, is infallible.

I will not stop now to go into the metaphysics of the problem, but there is such a thing as a universal memory, quite independent of that little fragmentary memory enjoyed by each item of the human family, and the highest kind of clairvoyance enables the person who enjoys it to draw upon that universal memory, which is just as clear and certain in reference to events that have transpired a million years ago as to those of yesterday. On that topic alone I could dilate at great length, but our methods of communicating ideas from one to another are such that it is necessary to pay attention to one thing at a time; so, putting off to a more convenient opportunity a fuller exposition of the theory of the higher clairvoyance—of Nature's memory, in fact—I

will go on to relate something of what is remembered concerning Atlantis a million years ago.

The configuration of the earth at that time was such that land stretched in an unbroken, continental mass from what is now Mexico to Scotland. Southward it included the greater part of what is now Brazil, and stretched across to what is now Africa, then sea for the most part, except for its northern portion. This northern portion stretched out a tongue of land, of which the present Canary Islands were the mountain tops, towards the great Atlantean continent, and a narrow strait between its extremity and the Atlantean shore was the only water it would have been necessary to cross in a journey from China to Peru.

The greatest capital of this vast continent, which, of course, included many nations and many great cities, was situated, in what is now mid-ocean, between the Cape de Verde Islands and the West Indies. The condition of things, however, to which I am now referring was not that to which Plato's tradition refers. Stupendous changes came over the scene before the huge continent was reduced in size to the island Atlantis, which existed up to about 11,500 years ago. Of these changes I will speak presently, but let us look back first to the really palmy days of the old Atlantean civilisation.

I take the period of a million years ago, not because that was the beginning of the civilisation in question, but because this was then at its height. It had been the product of a long course of human evolution, the study of which would take us back to an almost immeasurably greater antiquity; but the first conception concerning the past that it is important to get firmly in the mind, is that humanity, in epochs of which modern history has entirely lost sight, was in some respects quite on a level with that of our own day. In others it was far behind, but its deficiencies had reference

to its moral rather than to its intellectual development, as will presently be made clear.

At the particular period, indeed, on which I have focussed attention, the people were innocent enough. They were under the very benign rule of wise and lofty-minded emperors; and, though the idea of political liberty, as we understand the term, had hardly dawned upon them, they were docile, industrious, and peaceful, so that there was no extreme poverty amongst them, no fretful discontent. Public institutions were designed for the welfare of all, and life was much smoother all round than with us. The arts and sciences were developed to a high degree. Writing, painting, architecture, and sculpture were all practised as freely as amongst ourselves, and the engineering work accomplished was on a scale that would almost dazzle the builders of the Forth Bridge or the Nile dam. But it ran, so to speak, in very different channels from our engineering.

Invention had not followed the same lines as in our day, and the very forces employed in engineering work were quite unlike those we manipulate. I do not gather that the Atlanteans had any steam machinery, but, on the other hand, they had control of some natural force that at present we have lost sight of. This was a repulsive force of some kind, the use of which enabled Atlanteans to navigate the air in a way we have not yet been able to imitate. Their air boats emitted an energy that at the same time kept them suspended above the earth's surface, and could be employed to drive them in any required direction.

Their chemistry, again, had advanced along lines on which we, their remote descendants, have not yet succeeded in travelling, and they had got at the secret of transmutation, so that the manufacture of gold—which they prized for its ornamental value quite as much as we do—was a regular branch of industry. In the present day advanced chemists

have got beyond the silly stage of denial which characterised the mind of the last century, and every great chemist would now agree that there is nothing absurd in the theory of transmutation, though we have not yet got the clue to the process. Modern accepted views of the constitution of matter point to transmutation as a possibility of the future.

Amongst the achievements of the Atlanteans, "conspicuous by their absence," stands prominently the art of printing. If that simple invention had been hit upon earlier in the world's history, it would have made later progress very different. Inscriptions, even on stone, are evanescent compared to those on printed paper, because you have thousands of the one for every single example of the other. England, with all its museums and buildings, might sink beneath the waves, all Europe might follow its example, but the records of its life could never perish, because they are to be found in every library in the world. In Atlantean times records of civilisation were all concentrated within its own area, and that was limited. Asia was inhabited, certainly, but not by a people comparable in civilisation with the Atlanteans. Their time of progress was to come later, so, when the heyday of Atlantean civilisation was over, when ultimately the very land itself perished, its only traces were found in colonies that for various reasons we can quite understand were very far from repeating the conditions of the parent state.

And amongst the knowledge conspicuous by its absence must be included all that which gives us our power of rapid communication all about the world. There were no electric telegraphs in Atlantean times, and from the Atlantean's point of view there was no world outside his own continent worth talking about. There was plenty of other land about the world. Australia, for instance, was about three or four times as large as it is now, and was incalculably

older land than Atlantis, for, going back many millions of years ago, there was a completely different configuration of the world's geography from that of the Atlantean period. But nowhere, except in the Atlantean continent, was there any civilisation.

I have explained that, while without some of the scientific acquirements of our own period, the Atlanteans were in possession of other knowledge which we have not yet recovered. Amongst these they exercised some powers that are very faintly, as yet, foreshadowed by the imperfectly understood phenomena of mesmerism. These powers rendered the mere muscular superiority of one person over another quite unimportant. We may call the power in question "psychic force," for want of a better name. Now, this could be acquired quite as fully by women as by men. Indeed, the women possessed it, as a rule, in a somewhat higher perfection than the men, and the result was that the relative position of the sexes was by no means the same amongst the Atlanteans as amongst ourselves.

Women were fully the equals of men in effective strength, and, as a consequence, were their equals socially and politically. Not that in those days people exercised political power by voting, as with us, but women were appointed members of various councils that were entrusted with important functions, and were made rulers of provinces under the beneficent despot at the head of things. It is not my province to discuss political questions, or I might launch out into a panegyric of this interesting system.

From the summit level of its happiest age—about a million years ago—Atlantean civilisation began to decline. The innocence of the people was rather the innocence of childhood than that of enlightened spiritual conviction. The powers many of them possessed were easily turned to selfish and ignoble uses. Loyalty to the beneficent rulers

began to fade away. Insurrections and rebellions broke out, and by degrees the country became a prey to formidable civil wars. The huge chapter of the world's history which the Atlantean period represented drew towards its melancholy close.

Vast cataclysmic convulsions began to break up the great continent, and about 800,000 years ago changes set in which ultimately rent it in twain, separating it from what then gradually began to grow into what is now America, and breaking off its north-eastern portion. This in time became joined on to new land, formed by the upheaval of Scandinavia and Western Germany, so that, at the close of these great changes, we find a huge body of land stretching from the North Cape down to Spain, and, of course, including the region which is now Great Britain and Ireland. These did not become insular till very much later.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BEQUESTS OF ATLANTIS.

THE story told in the last chapter was not merely one of entrancing interest in itself, but important as enabling us to understand the condition of the world as we now find it. I must follow it up a little further in order to give my readers a clue to the comprehension of much that lies around us in the world to-day that would be hopelessly mysterious without that clue.

I have spoken of the degradation and decay that gradually set in towards the close of the million of years that have elapsed since the old continent was enjoying its maximum glory. But there were some among the Atlanteans more enlightened than the rest, and as the old civilisation was corrupted, these people led great streams of emigration to other parts of the world. One such stream gave rise to the real early civilisation of Egypt, at that time a vast region with a sea-shore on the west—where now we find nothing but the vacant sands of the Sahara—and a northern portion that stretched right over that which is now the eastern basin of the Mediterranean.

The leaders of this great migration were far superior in knowledge and moral growth to the people who were then native to the country. From among them were chosen the kings, priests, and teachers of the indigenous population, and at the first glance it does seem surprising that we have

no intelligible records left that embody the story of their achievements; but the truth is, that only a small portion of modern Egypt coincides with the original Egypt of the early period. Part of that is under the eastern Mediterranean, and part under the desert sands; while, as regards the part which *did* correspond with the present inhabited portion, that was for a prolonged period itself under water, so that the sites of the early cities were entirely obliterated by sedimentary deposits, not to speak of the alluvial deposits of Nile mud which were laid over these again when the country once more, in the progress of ages, became dry land, and when the river draining the African interior resumed something like its former course. Its deflection by only a few miles one way or the other from that former course would be enough to baffle archæological research, not even guided by the suspicion that there is anything to look for at any great distance from the present course of the stream.

However, in spite of all these confusing circumstances, there is one monument that might link modern research with the great early civilisation if we could only escape from fixed prepossessions as to its origin, and that is the great pyramid itself. This is really a bequest from the very early time. Absurd conjectures of all sorts have gathered round the great pyramid, and Egyptian monarchs of the historical period, who were merely concerned, in reality, with repairing or altering it, have been accepted by Egyptologists as having been its builders. Theorists on a still humbler mental level—and impressed with the notion that the Old Testament must contain the complete history of the ancient world—have supposed that it was built to store the corn produced in the years of plenty against the years of scarcity foretold by Joseph. Other imaginative persons, impressed with the curious relations that undoubtedly exist between the position and dimensions of the pyramid on the one hand,

and the facts of astronomy on the other, have persisted in regarding the strange building as an astronomical observatory for which it has almost every conceivable disqualification.

If I were to attempt an account of the purposes for which it really was erected, I should have to write of nothing else for a long time to come in order to make the narrative even intelligible, and then some of its purposes would remain in obscurity for want of a deeper occult knowledge than I can lay claim to. The time has not yet come for the complete removal of the mystery that enshrouds it, but, anyhow, this much is known to people who have even partial access to the "Memory of Nature." The pyramid was built, not in the reign of Cheops, or Kufu as he is called sometimes, 4000 or 5000 years before Christ, but at a period more like 200,000 years ago, under the direction of authorities who foresaw that, in the changes with which geography was threatened, it would for a time lie under water. They wished it to survive any such experience, and for this reason adopted the very stable form we see. Of course, the great majority of the smaller pyramids that stud the Nile valley were of relatively recent date, and actually were designed to be the tombs of kings, but their shape was simply copied from the mysterious erection, already of fathomless antiquity when the earliest of the Pharaohs spoken of in history took its form as their model.

The great pyramid is not by any means the only monument of Atlantean migrations. We have one in our own country—Stonehenge. For want of the clue afforded by a knowledge of Atlantean history, our antiquarians have blundered absurdly in their speculations as to the origin of Stonehenge. The most absurd guess of all is that put forward by Fergusson, the historian of architecture, who thinks Stonehenge must have been built in the time of

King Arthur to celebrate his great battles over the heathen. A somewhat less preposterous theory vaguely assigns its construction to Druids, but the Druids, as far as we know anything about them, were not much better than savages themselves, and utterly unable to cope with the problems of engineering involved in the manipulation of the huge stones of which the ancient temple consists.

Atlantean immigrants who came to the country a good deal later than the migration to Egypt—perhaps about 100,000 years ago—were really the engineers of Stonehenge, and they deliberately adopted the stern, rugged simplicity of its design because they were out of patience with the extravagant devotion to luxury and ornamentation then prevailing among the degenerate Atlanteans themselves. At that time Western Europe was all one mass of land extending down from the Scandinavian peninsula to the southern part of Spain. All along this vast coast-line the Atlantean immigrants settled, and put up rough stone monuments, hundreds of which, besides Stonehenge, survive to the present day. A forest of them is to be found at Carnac, in Brittany, and the mysterious remains called “Dolmens,” consisting of a few huge stones piled one upon another in the form of rude altars, are all bequests from Atlantis.

But the old stones constitute the least important of the legacies bequeathed to us by the vanished continent. To show how the interest of the Atlantean story reaches its climax, I must explain some mysteries of Nature that have ceased to be mysterious for students of occult science, but still lie within the domain of the “unknowable” by the majority of our contemporaries—the heirs of mediæval ignorance concerning the origin, growth, and destinies of the human soul. Much that is generally unseen in and around this world is only unseeable by common eyesight.

The powers of perception which I have already so often referred to as clairvoyance, when developed to a high degree of perfection, bring into view a vast range of natural phenomena that are absolutely invisible to physical sight, and that is how occultists come to know that which they do know concerning the human soul as an entity considered apart from any particular body which it may animate for a time.

We cannot expect just yet to find the professional clergy *leading* inquiries of this sort. They are timid about exact knowledge in such matters, as they always have been since the days when they were timid about admitting that the earth was round, or, more recently, in admitting that it can have existed for more than six thousand years. But the best of them are already falling into line with advancing knowledge, and eventually they will all come to see that occult teaching concerning the genesis, growth, and progress of the soul is quite in harmony with all that is essential in the foundations of religious belief. I merely say that, in passing, to guard against a possible misapprehension. The task of showing how religious beliefs, properly understood, are in harmony with real spiritual science would be one I should gladly undertake, but it would, for the moment, constitute too long a digression.

The fact that the soul, as an entity, survives the death of the body, is the one great all-important fact that has been established on a basis of irrefutable certainty by the investigations of the spiritualists. But, in the opinion of most occult students, they have not done much more than establish that fact. People who have "passed over" may, under some circumstances, if they wish, communicate with still living friends; but they do not at once know all that is going to happen to them, any more than a baby just born on this plane of life knows all that is awaiting him in life. And,

later on, they pass out of the conditions which make communication possible—at all events, in the ordinary spiritualistic way. So the occult student who wants to know a great deal more than his lately deceased friend can tell him, has to fall back on other sources of information. Theosophical books will explain the nature and credibility of these other sources of information. For the moment I can only deal with results. Readers who may be sufficiently interested to want to know in detail how these results are reached, must be referred to the books.

The all-important fact that has been ascertained about the destinies of the soul is that, after prolonged experiences on higher planes of Nature, some of which go far to realise the conventional idea of Heaven, every human soul is born again on earth in the ordinary way, and runs the race of life anew. This supremely important truth is known to occultists as the doctrine of "Reincarnation," and, when properly understood, it illuminates the dark mysteries of earth life as the sunrise illuminates a landscape. It clears away ninety-nine hundredths of the painful enigmas of life. The inequalities of health, mental capacity, and worldly station assume an entirely new aspect for the man who realises that each life any one of us is leading is merely one of *hundreds* through which he has passed in bygone ages; only one in the long series still before him. As in the course of a single life there may be days of enjoyment and days of sorrow or pain, periods of good health and periods of bad, so in the long series of lives which each human being has to go through some will be irksome and troubled, others will be sunshiny and joyous.

In the long account there is a far nearer approach to equality of experience than a glance round at any given moment of the world's history would lead us to suppose possible. Those who may now be doing the rough work of

the world are not in any true sense victims of the "accident of birth": they are (ignoring exceptional cases that can be explained in other ways) the younger members of the human family, subordinate to their seniors for a time. All have been through the same sort of mill in *their* time, and all have emerged from humbler conditions of existence through which they have passed in remote ages of antiquity, or perhaps much more recently. "But we don't remember former lives," people will be sure to answer. To which I reply: "Most of us do not, but *some of us do!*" Most of us do not because we have not yet evolved the faculties required for such draughts upon the universal memory of Nature.

And beyond that, students of occult science can quite clearly see why, at present, it is not provided for in the scheme of things that all should remember. To go into that explanation fully would take too much time, but I may give any thoughtful reader the clue to the puzzle by suggesting that moral responsibility increases with knowledge. More is expected from those to whom more is given, and, as I repeat, there is no such thing as the so-called "accident of birth." The conditions of life to which, at each return to earth, each soul is consigned, are determined by his own acts in the past life as certainly as the sum total of a column of figures is determined by the magnitude of the items. Of all the mysteries of Nature none are of deeper significance or of greater importance than this sublime system of reincarnation going on around us every minute—for "every minute dies a man, every minute one is born"—and every minute vindicating for those who have eyes to see the justice that rules the ultimate destinies of man.

And now I think it will be obvious that I was entitled to say there are bequests from Atlantis on the stage of this century of greater importance than the old stone ruins that have sur-

vived from the Atlantean period. *We ourselves* are the bequests of Atlantis! They were not our ancestors, in the common acceptation of the word, who lived in the lost continent. We lived there in our time, and worked or played, sinned or suffered, profited by or neglected our opportunities, as the case may have been, and in variegated experience since that long-forgotten era have been reaping the consequences of our action, and either getting credit with the rulers of destiny, or deepening our unfortunate indebtedness. For all of us, as soon as we understand our own nature aright, research into the early history of our race is not a mere exercise of the mind or a gratification of antiquarian curiosity, but a deeply instructive examination of our own life history.

CHAPTER VII.

ASTRONOMY ANCIENT AND MODERN.

THE light that has been shed upon the early civilisations of mankind by the story of Atlantis, with which I have been engaged in the last two chapters, will incline people who appreciate its value to take a relatively modest view of modern scientific achievement. Instead of regarding that as an altogether new and original result of modern enlightenment, it will be seen that we are only now beginning to recover knowledge which was the common property of mankind in ages so remote from all those of which we have any literary records, that we can only now get touch with them by new methods of research, available, as yet, for only a few abnormally-gifted persons. But, at the same time, a correct understanding of Atlantean science, and a comparison between that and our own, need not leave us in any condition of mental humiliation.

The Atlanteans, it is true, were in possession of some highly important natural knowledge which we have not yet recovered, and they seem to have acquired this by devoting themselves much more ardently than we have done to the study of forces inherent in the nature of the human creature. But the characteristic of modern science has been great accuracy and precision in reference to the purely physical aspects of Nature. Roughly summing up the matter, one may describe Atlantean knowledge as due to

the application of the human *will* to the investigation of unseen mysteries in Nature, while that which has been acquired in the nineteenth century has been due to the perfection of instruments applicable to research. These cannot do more than make us acquainted with the outsides of things, so to speak, but the accuracy with which they accomplish that result is charming to the mind in a very high degree, and may be laying the foundation of a very much more intelligent comprehension of the inner nature of things, when that, in turn, comes within the range of modern investigation, than was attained to by the Atlanteans—though they could make gold, navigate the air, and slay their enemies by the exertion of will in a manner that we (happily for us, perhaps, as regards the last detail) have not yet rediscovered. We have reason to believe that the Atlanteans did know something about the stars and planets that is not at present included in the consciousness of modern astronomers, but they did not apparently possess any instruments worthy of comparison for a moment with those in familiar use to-day at every observatory in Europe.

People who do not make a special study of astronomy credit modern astronomers with too much knowledge in one direction and with too little in another. I am going to try and show first what kind of knowledge they do possess in perfection, and then, where and why their limitations come in. If we wanted to select one word which should be the key-word, as it were, of modern science, a single word to be its motto, that word would be "measurement." It is by accurately measuring distances, magnitudes, temperatures, weights, and so on, that the grand results of chemistry, physics, electricity, as well as those of astronomy, have been reached. Modern scientists are fanatical about the importance of measurement. A chemical analysis must

be quantitative to have any value. The energies of an electric current must be expressed in terms which measure its volume, its intensity, its power of overcoming the resistance of various kinds of conductors, with the minutest conceivable accuracy. In dealing with the characteristics of light, we must use the ten-millionth of an inch as the unit of measurement when we are talking about wave lengths. And in astronomy, instruments are used that will measure distances in the sky that are no greater than would be covered by a human hair held 36 feet from the eye.

We reach, in astronomy, a series of conclusions about the distances from us of some of the fixed stars. These conclusions rest upon observations of apparent movements of such stars against the background of the sky, as they are observed at intervals of six months when the earth has completely crossed over to the other side of its orbit. But though that crossing means that the earth is 180 millions of miles away from its previous position, the apparent movement of the star is not greater than the diameter of a penny looked at from a distance of two miles. None the less are the instruments used of such exquisite mechanical perfection that they can deal quite successfully with these minute measurements, and bring out results which we feel sure are approximately right, though the figures used to express them are beyond the grasp of the imagination.

Measurement has been so fundamental a principle in connection with the work of the modern astronomer, that for a considerable time his knowledge did not extend much beyond celestial measurements. These, of course, had to do with other ideas besides those of distance. The orbits in which the planets moved came under the searching eye of instrumental measurement, and, applying mathematical laws to each set of figures obtained by observation, other figures equally trustworthy could be deduced. Thus we

came to know definitely all about the density and mass—practically the weight—of the planets and of the sun. And figures of this kind, though at the first glance they may seem to leave us knowing very little about the heavenly bodies in question, are instructive in themselves by enabling us to realise the scale on which the universe is constructed. The distances we have to talk about in reference to our solar system alone are terribly stupendous. The earth swings round in space at a distance of more than ninety millions of miles from the sun, but we are quite near compared with some of the other planets of our family. Jupiter is five times as far from the sun as we are, and the outermost planet as yet discovered, Neptune, is thirty times as far, or over 2700 millions of miles away. The light by which we see Neptune has to radiate out from the sun to that planet, and then come back to us, and though light travels at the rate of 186,000 miles per *second*, it takes over four hours on the voyage out and home when it illuminates Neptune for our benefit. These figures give one some sort of idea concerning the magnitude of the solar system as a whole. And yet the orbit of Neptune, which may be thought of, for the present, as including the whole solar system, bears a surprising relation to the region in space that is, so to speak, allotted to the solar system.

If you imagine that region a spherical space extending to the nearest of the fixed stars, how big would that space be compared to the diameter of the system itself, the orbit of Neptune? The answer is, that if we had a flat map of that spherical region, and drew it so that the circle was about equal in area to Lincoln's Inn-fields, then the whole solar system would have to be represented by a shilling in the middle. Thousands of millions of miles are as nothing compared with the distances of the fixed stars. The nearest of them is twenty or thirty *billions* of miles away

from us, and a billion is a million million. These figures are almost meaningless to the mind, but they have been twisted into all manner of shapes by various writers on astronomy in the hope of rendering them a little more suggestive. If there was a railway to the nearest of the fixed stars, and the fare for passengers was a penny for a hundred miles, what would be the price of the through ticket? The answer is a sum about equivalent to the National Debt of England. How long would the journey take you, travelling at the ordinary rate of a good express train, or, say, sixty miles an hour? The answer is too big to be helpful to the mind. It is over 50 million years. Light, the speed of which I mentioned just now, takes three years and a half to come from the nearest fixed star, and the distance of the brightest star in the heavens, Sirius, is such that light takes twenty-two years to reach us from that wonderful orb.

Facts of this kind can be served out to us by modern astronomers to any extent we desire. And besides the measurements they are enabled to undertake, astronomers can now reach conclusions that are more interesting even than their figures. Other sciences have lent their aid to astronomy, and, above all, that which enables us to discover, from the examination of light, the chemical constitution of the body which emits it. The light to the eye may look just the same whether it comes from highly-heated carbon or from highly-heated iron. But to the spectroscope these two kinds of light look very different indeed. The trained observer can recognise one from the other at a glance. And so every kind of substance known to chemistry, when heated sufficiently to be luminous, gives out its own kind of light, and no other. In this previously unexpected way astronomers were suddenly put in possession of a resource, an instrument, by means of which they were enabled to

ascertain first what the sun was made of, and eventually what each star that shines with its own light is made of.

• This method does not tell us what the planets of our own system are made of, because they merely reflect the light of the sun. They do not give out any of their own. But as far as the solar system goes, spectroscopic research shows us that the sun, anyhow, is made of practically the same elements as the earth; and as independent reasoning along another line seems to show clearly that all the bodies of the solar system were born, in the first instance, from one great nebula, or cloud, of intensely-heated matter—so hot as to be all in the gaseous state—it is reasonable to infer that all the planets are made of the same materials, though it is not necessary to suppose that in each of them those materials would be found in the same proportions. “Elements that are rare with us may be in great abundance in Mars or Venus, and *vice versa*. There are some interesting ideas hanging on to that suggestion, but they belong to the region of speculative astronomy, and, for the moment, I am concerned with giving a general view of the kind of knowledge that modern astronomy really has attained to.

Another kind of knowledge coming within the reach of astronomy when the spectroscope was invented, was that which revealed the true character of the faint cloudy patches of light discernible all about the heavens with the aid of good telescopes, though none of them are visible to the naked eye. These “nebulæ” were thought at one time to be no more than masses, or clusters, of very distant stars, so far off that no telescope would “resolve” them, as the phrase is, into separate points of light. Now we know that solid bodies give out one kind of light, and highly-heated gaseous bodies another kind, so it is demonstrable which of the nebulæ are star clusters not resolved, and which are true nebulæ—masses of glowing gas in the state our system was

in once upon a time, at a period so remote in the past that the beginnings of the Atlantean age would be as yesterday in comparison. Those true nebulae may therefore be safely regarded as solar systems in course of formation, destined to be the home of life and evolution at some period in the future so inconceivably distant that way, that the contemplation of such a range of time is almost more bewildering—because one shade nearer the possibility of realisation—than the hopeless enigma of eternity.

So, creeping on from one step to another, modern astronomy has come to include a great volume of knowledge concerning what I have called the outsides of the heavenly bodies. I have not by any means completed the catalogue of its achievements in that direction. It has learned a great deal about double and multiple stars; something about comets; it has engaged in plausible and reasonable guesses concerning the origin of stars that suddenly blaze up into intense luminosity, and then rapidly decline again in lustre. To some of these interesting departments of modern astronomy I must return on some other occasion; but, for the moment, what I am wanting to suggest is this: A great deal more may, perhaps, be ultimately learned about the heavenly bodies, or, at any rate, about some of them, than is concerned merely with their outsides. Occult science here comes in, and has, at all events, something to tell us about some of the heavenly bodies that no telescope, no spectroscope, no mathematical calculations can reveal or even hint at.

The methods of research applied to the elucidation of the Atlantean problem are applicable, to some extent, to the investigation of other worlds besides this. Certainly, when clairvoyant research is pushed beyond the limits of our own world, it can only be employed to deal with broader questions than those it may be employed to solve in reference

to the history, however remote, of our own race. But still it can tell us much that is of absorbing interest in reference to the other planets of our own system, and in reference to the early development of this system from the incandescent material out of which it was built. And, independently of such information, there are mysteries connected with the relationship, so to speak, of the various planets, and even of the distant stars, with one another which are not suspected by commonplace astronomy, and which, indeed, lie hopelessly and for ever beyond the reach of the methods of research that astronomy has employed so creditably and to such great advantage. Let no one imagine that the true occultist despises the achievements of the painstaking, beautifully precise, and accurate physical science that has been the glory of the century just complete. But there are other ranges of natural research to be respected also by those who know what they are talking about, and in the next chapter I shall have something to say about the occult side of astronomy.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEGLECTED PHASES OF ASTRONOMY.

MODERN astronomy, as I have endeavoured to show, commands our respect by reason of its beautiful accuracy and delicacy of observation within the limits it has drawn around its work. But the temper of mind in which scientific men of the nineteenth century have, for the most part, regarded Nature, has led them to neglect all those aspects of astronomy which do not come within the range of measurement. And the prevailing mental fault of the nineteenth century has been conceit with itself and its own achievements, giving rise to contempt for everything it did not understand. Traditions handed down from earlier periods of the world's civilisation have been thrown aside as superstition if they did not fit in with knowledge that the nineteenth century had acquired for itself. Our tendency to do this has been aggravated by the objectionable shape in which, for the most part, such traditions have come down to modern times. But none the less has this hasty, careless policy betrayed the modern scientific world into taking up an attitude, in reference to a multitude of Nature's most interesting mysteries, for which we shall be laughed at by the scientists of the future much more contemptuously even than we have been laughing at the folly of our ancestors.

The study of the heavens in past ages bore fruit of a wholly different kind from that which has rewarded the ob-

servations of telescopic astronomers. The prevailing belief was that the stars and planets, the sun and the moon, exercise some mysterious influence on human affairs, and, generally, on the world in which we live. The further back we go in clairvoyant investigation, the more persistent and minute we find this belief to have been, and it survived up to a very recent period. It survives, for that matter, with some modifications, amongst those who know, up to the present time, and will revive with great effect at some period in the future, when, perhaps, the mysteries concerned will be better understood than in the past. But the point I want to make first, before going into speculations concerning the future, is that ancient astronomy—or “astrology,” as it used to be called—represented an enormous volume of conviction amongst millions of people far advanced in other branches of knowledge and culture, to an extent that ought to make modern thinkers pause before scoffing at their beliefs.

Our principal difficulty in handling the subject is that we have no authentic record of the theories that prevailed among ancient astrologers in reference to the influence of the stars on human affairs. We only know that they gave ~~an~~ amount of attention to the whole subject, which makes it certain that experience had shown them to be on the right track. They probably had no theory to account for the facts they observed, but they had not fallen into the peculiar vice of our age—that of denying that a fact is a fact if we cannot understand it.

A few years ago a spiritualist medium, who was the innocent cause of strange occurrences, and whom, for the purposes of this anecdote, I will call the Victim, was prosecuted by a truculent professor, who fancied that his teaspoonful of knowledge was an ocean (and whom I will call the Brute), before a magistrate who conceived himself qualified to hold opinions about the mysteries of Nature, and

whom, for the moment, I will call the Fool.* The Victim brought up a number of witnesses of first-rate character and social standing to show that the strange occurrences had really taken place. Such evidence would have sufficed to hang any man, if the fact under consideration had been a murder, but the Brute brought a witness who declared that he had *not* seen the occurrences in question, and the Fool gave judgment that, though the weight of evidence to show they *had* occurred was overwhelming, it could not be accepted because it was "contrary to the known laws of Nature" that such occurrences could take place. That idiotic decision illustrates the vice of which I am speaking—the notion that we, in the van of scientific progress, are familiar with the whole body of Nature's laws, so that if anything is alleged to have occurred which will not go into any of our pigeon-holes, it simply did not occur, and the people who say it did are liars.

It is only since this vice has been rampant among us in its most aggravated forms that we have fallen into the imbecile state of mind that treats astrology as having been no more than a groundless superstition. The supremely great mind of Francis Bacon found room for a belief in astrology. Kepler, one of the founders of modern astronomy, avows that a study of the facts has "instructed and compelled my unwilling belief" in the inexplicable relationship of planetary aspects and conjunctions with human affairs; and Flamsteed, the first Astronomer-Royal of Greenwich Observatory, was not only a believer in astrology, but a practical astrologer himself, and he cast an astrological figure to determine the probable future of the observatory itself. Nor has the study been altogether neglected even in our own time. Plenty of text-books are in print, and new ones are often appearing, which teach inquirers the rules of the astrological art as far as it is understood now; and other

books on the subject have accumulated great masses of evidence to show that though we cannot see the sense of it, astrological forecasts of the future do continually turn out right. My limits will not allow me to tell stories in detail. I know of one case in which a man's death, by an unusual kind of accident, at something over sixty, was foretold at his birth by an astrologer (long since deceased), together with the leading events of his lifetime.

The books record such cases to an extent that makes the theory of accidental coincidence altogether ridiculous. And in a manner that is profoundly mysterious, but almost invariable, the "horoscope," or map of the heavens, at the time of anybody's birth, will be found to correspond, in certain ways, with his physical appearance. I am not going to guess why certain configurations of the planets and stars at the moment of a birth should correspond with the physical characteristics of the child. The idea is so difficult to understand that it looks absurd, and all one can say is that it *is* so, and every student who has the sense to examine the facts before coming to conclusions about them, will bear testimony that it is so.

Unfortunately we have lost touch with the finer details of the astrological art as practised by the scientists of the ancient world, and, so far, the scientists of our world have not taken the trouble to work up the lost knowledge afresh. All that we know of astrology practically in the present day is derived from the writings of the Egyptian philosopher, Ptolemy. Later writers do little more than recast his teaching. We have at present about as much touch with the lost science as our successors would have, let us say, with electricity, if the existing world were swept out of existence, and they, living a million years hence in a new continent, had no writings on the subject except an odd volume of Lardner's *Encyclopædia* containing an article

about it. The situation is all the more tantalising because, if we go back far enough, we find that in Old Chaldea—the country lying along the valley of the Euphrates—the learned men of the time not only made great use of astrology, but possessed so complete a comprehension of the solar system, that they had anticipated our exact knowledge of the distances and masses of the planets. They seem to have been astronomers, in our sense, as well as astrologers, though in those days measurements were apparently held to be of little importance beside what may be called the human interest of the heavens.

In speaking of Chaldean knowledge, I am, of course, drawing upon the results of clairvoyant investigation for my facts. This investigation has not yet recovered touch with Chaldean methods of astrological calculation, but it shows that, at a period about twenty thousand years ago, the Chaldean priests constructed their temples on astronomical principles. A series of temples in that country constituted a kind of orrery, or model of the solar system. The great temple in the middle stood for the sun. At distances that corresponded in their proportions with the real distances, other temples represented the various planets, and the sizes were all to scale, though, as we find necessary in drawing a map of the solar system, the Chaldeans had to adopt one scale for sizes and another for distances. Anyhow, the arrangement of the temples showed that they already, at that remote date, knew about the existence of Uranus and Neptune, and apparently they were acquainted with one planet that has long been suspected to exist, but has never yet been seen by modern eyes—the interior little world, provisionally called Vulcan, revolving so close to the sun that it is inside the orbit of Mercury.

Already a fairly widespread appreciation of the situation, as I have described it, is leading a good many people to pay

attention to astrology, and some of them get too enthusiastic, fancying that the "science," as they regard it, can tell us a great deal more than is really possible. It is not a science at all in its present condition, but a confused mass of rules imperfectly understood, by which calculations can be made, but for no one of which have we any foundation in reason. All we know is that calculations made along those lines come out right in a proportion of cases that makes all talk of coincidence absurd. But the art—regarding it in that light rather than as a science—is fraught with embarrassments. In its first broad application it has to do with "nativities," with figures, or maps representing the positions of the stars and planets in the heavens at the moment of a child's birth. But, first of all, how often is the real, exact moment of a child's birth accurately recorded? An error of five minutes will alter the significance of the figure. And what is the exact moment of a birth? It is needless for me here to go into physiological details on that point. Enough to say that the child's first cry is the orthodox moment in question, according to most modern astrologers.

Given any moment, it is very easy to "put up the figure," as the phrase goes. All the necessary almanacs and tables are regularly published, and anyone can learn the rules for "casting the horoscope." But to read its meaning is quite another business. For that, an astrologer has to be saturated with a knowledge of all the significances attributed by Ptolemy to the various—almost infinitely various—conjunctions, aspects, relative angular distances, and so forth, of the heavenly bodies concerned. And in order to predict future events, according to the rule-of-thumb methods handed down to us, intricate calculations have to be made as to the places that will be occupied by the planets at future periods. Finally, in regard to nativities, no modern astrologer of intelligence would claim to be able to do more

than forecast probabilities. The calculations, as we have to make them now, are either too slovenly to be trustworthy, or too intricate to be accomplished by anybody with exactitude. But there is another branch of astrology called "horary astrology," which does not aim at doing so much as that kind which deals with nativities, but is more easily worked. For choice, it seems more absurd—more hopelessly opposed to reason—than the kind I have been describing.

But experience again floors incredulity. If some really important, momentous question concerning your life, health, fortunes, or happiness is preying on your mind, and it suddenly occurs to you, Could astrology answer this question for me?—ridiculous and preposterous though it may seem, astrology most likely could! You yourself, if you are an astrologer, or somebody else for you—the rules to be followed being a little different in the two cases—must put up a figure, draw a map of the heavens, for the moment at which the idea of doing the thing occurred to you. If you have accurately observed that moment, the work can be done at any convenient time afterwards. Then the map is read according to certain rules (which do not involve any intricate calculations), and the answer stares you in the face!

Perhaps, indeed, the figure will not, so to speak, make sense. It will not be coherent. It will, perhaps, resemble a mass of letters jumbled together at random, as compared with intelligible words. But if it does make sense, it will very generally turn out to tell the truth. That is the wonderful part of the story. You cannot begin to explain why. The whole business is utterly unintelligible, but the facts of experience are stubborn things. When they come within our own experience, we all submit to their force, but when they are gathered up by other people, then there are two ways of looking at them. We may say: That sounds

all nonsense, so the people who relate their experience must be telling lies. Or we may say: Our knowledge concerning the mysteries of Nature is, so far, the merest smattering. For anything which really happens there must be an explanation to be got at sooner or later. Since the unintelligible experience is there to guide us, let us examine, investigate, try new experiments, gather together such a volume of facts that the actuality of the occurrence shall be beyond dispute, and then let us set out in all directions to hunt for the clue to the infinite marvel with which we have to deal. For, remember that there is no problem with which scientific investigation could concern itself that is of deeper significance to the human race than this which lies at the root of the astrological mystery. To what extent is the future mapped out beforehand by powers above us? How is this globe on which we live concatenated in its destinies with the other globes wandering in space? What, in the name of all that is bewildering, can be the nature of the unseen influences pouring down on this earth across the awful distances that separate us from the planets and the stars? And how, as they intermingle, do they qualify, modify, or accentuate each other?

The leaders of orthodox thought in the present age of the world, and by that phrase I mean, of course, the leading scientists of the time—for no flattery could now assign that title to the theologians—represent a woeful mixture of good qualities and bad. They are so careful, so accurate, so beautifully painstaking within the limits of their activity, that from one point of view they command enthusiastic admiration. And yet they have so many characteristics in common with the Man of the Muck Rake in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. They will not interest themselves in anything except the physical plane of Nature. A problem must come within the range of laboratory experiment to be a

problem for modern science. That is a glorious foundation most assuredly, but it is only a foundation, and the time cannot now be far off when the architects of science will begin to dream of the mighty structure that must ultimately rest upon it, and set themselves to work to gather the new kind of material with which alone that structure can be raised.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MYSTERY OF FORCE.

THE forces or influences emanating from the planets, of which I was writing in the last chapter when describing the imperfect remnants of knowledge rescued from the oblivion of ages in connection with astrology, are so subtle in their nature, and out of gear with the better understood forces of the physical plane, that stupid people jeer at any attempt to study them at all, and, in the foolish conceit of ignorance, deny their very existence. That habit of mind is doing more at the present day to retard the progress of knowledge than any other mental failing or weakness to which we are subject; and before going on to discuss some other intricacies of Nature that are on a level, as regards their intangibility, with the incomprehensible energies pervading the whole solar system, I want to point out how equally mysterious in themselves are some of the forces that everybody recognises as such, in connection with practical inventions in the department of electric science.

I might, indeed, show reason to be cautious as regards the denial of ancient beliefs, merely on the ground that we cannot make sense of them, by simply discussing the phenomena of what is getting to be a familiar process—that called wireless telegraphy. The notion that the flash of an electric spark could set up influences that should be capable of producing a recognisable influence on instruments some

hundreds of miles away, without any link between the spark and the receiving instrument, except the all-pervading ether of space. would have seemed, only a few years ago, an absurdity too gross for the consideration of serious inquirers. But now all that has come to be everyday knowledge—as much a matter of course as the force in a steam boiler. Waves in the ether are now treated as commonplace agencies of Nature, like magnetism or gravitation. There is no sense in talking of such forces as concerned with science, and of others as concerned with superstition. We no more understand the force that we call “gravitation” than that which astrologers, for instance, say emanates from Jupiter, when that planet is in a certain aspect with the place of a child’s birth.

In both cases we can only observe facts and acknowledge an unseen influence. The facts that relate to the attraction of matter are more easily observed, I grant, than those that relate to the influence of the stars on human affairs, but for those who will take sufficient pains, the latter class of facts are as observable. And, for that matter, we do not yet know which class of facts will come within the range of explanation first. But, going back to our ether waves, I will *not* weary readers, who may have got tired, by this time, of the wonders of wireless telegraphy, with a special appeal to that branch of science in justification of my present argument—that forces must not be pooh-poohed because they are, for the time being, ill understood.

I will take an illustration, instead, from a new invention in electric science to which but little public attention has yet been called, and which, therefore, for its own sake, will be interesting to everyone who will follow my account of it, besides helping to warn us against the incredulity of ignorance. I am referring to a new instrument based upon a newly-discovered principle in magnetism, called the

"Telegraphone." Perhaps, indeed, if we state the principle on which the new instrument works, in the simplest terms that can be employed, it will not seem to represent any great novelty. Magnetic forces engendered by electric currents will so influence steel that, in turn, electric currents can be evoked by the energy of the magnetic conditions established. That is done when you convert plain steel into a magnet, and then use your magnet to induce electricity in a circuit surrounding it.

The familiar dynamo works on something like that principle; but the novelty comes in when we find that different parts of a long steel wire can be differently influenced by magnetism, so that, when the successive influences are made use of, a series of electric currents can be engendered corresponding with the original series which produced the latent effects. It is difficult to follow any explanation of this sort when it is given in abstract terms, so I will try to make the new discovery intelligible by coming to detail. Draw a long wire underneath a little electro-magnet which can be energised by minute electric currents at intervals. Whenever the current passes, a magnetic condition is set in that part of the steel wire passing under it at the moment. Now draw the wire back, and as each portion that has been so influenced passes under the magnet, it will engender in the wire surrounding it a minute current of electricity.

Anyone who even approximately understands the operation of a telephone, will see at once that we are getting into the neighbourhood of that kind of action. Suppose the currents sent into the magnet in the first instance are those engendered by a telephone. When they are returned in the manner I have described, it will be obvious that they will be of a kind that can be heard with the assistance of a telephone. See what this means! You can talk by means of

a telephone into the steel wire, and after any convenient interval of time your steel wire will talk back to you—or to anybody else who listens. Here, therefore, you have got a phonograph on an entirely new principle. There is no wax cylinder on which to take a record—nothing but a great coil of wire wound upon a drum for convenience.

The drum revolves as you talk to it, and some marvelously subtle, inconceivably delicate force invests each inch or two of the wire with special attributes, unseen, intangible in the most extreme degree, and yet capable of producing effects as specific as the human voice. The whole apparatus is, as I have said, a new kind of phonograph, and it reminds me of a saying attributed to an eminent man of science when the original Edison phonograph first came out:—"What a fortunate thing it is for the world that Edison is not a scientific man; because, if he had been, he would have known that the phonograph was impossible, and he would never have invented it!" The bon-mot hits both ways, and not with the least force against the dogmatism of commonplace science, which pooh-poohs as impossible everything that lies outside the range of its actual knowledge, as this stands at any given moment. One charm of the telephone is that, though the magnetic influences imparted to the wire remain active for considerable periods of time, they can be wiped off with extraordinary facility by simply passing the wire under a permanent magnet. Turn on the permanent magnet, and run the drum once along its course, and there you have the whole instrument clean and fit to receive a new record. Or, "another way," as the cookery books put it:

Instead of the steel wire on a drum, you may use an endless steel ribbon running over pulleys. Imagine we are dealing with the upper portion of the ribbon, and that this is running from right to left. At the extreme right you

arrange a permanent magnet, so that, as the ribbon passes under this, all previous records inhering in it are wiped off. Next in order you have the magnet connected with the speaking telephone. This imprints new records on the ribbon. Next in order you have the magnet attached to a receiving telephone. That picks up the message. But—and here comes in the new wonder and charm of the invention—*next* in order again you may have another and then another receiving magnet, so that the same message may be heard simultaneously by half-a-dozen different hearers in different places.

And “for ever and ever” (as the brook flows) the endless band of steel passing beneath the permanent magnet in its passage round the pulleys is cleaned of all previous impressions, and comes to the talking telephone ready to pick up the continued speech. It looks as though there were no assignable limit to the development of this method. One speaker might be dictating a message to a score of reporters in so many different towns at the same moment. Apparently the telegraphophone has accomplished one of the “leaps and bounds” we sometimes hear of in connection with progress of science. The instrument was exhibited, for the first time, I believe, in this country, at the last *conversazione* of the Royal Society, and is now on exhibition, for persons favoured by its proprietors, somewhere in the City.

And now, pressing the telegraphophone into the service of the argument with which I began, I ask whether anyone can pretend to understand the nature of the forces it employs any better than they can understand the forces or laws which relate the aspect of the heavens at any given moment, as regarded from any given spot of earth, with the destinies of a human life then and there beginning. The working of the magnetic fields along the wire of the telegra-

phone, in inducing the vibrations of sound in the telephones, is not a bit more intelligible than the influence of Saturn and Mars as observed by the astrologer.

I have spoken of the "influence" of the stars, following the usual language of astrologers, and I should be far from wishing to deny that they rain down mysterious influences upon us; but for those who find it impossible to believe in such influences, I would point out that it is not necessary to deny the facts of experience, which is always a stupid course to take, in order to construct a theory which escapes from the idea of influences. All thinkers who examine deeply into the *causes* which affect human destiny, and who combine their inquiries with an acceptance of that principle which occultists *know* to be true—the principle I have already spoken of in connection with the story of Atlantis, the principle of reincarnation—I should add, all who combine this belief with a belief that the world, on the whole, is governed justly—will realise that the causes determining the circumstances of each man's life are those that he has himself engendered in former lives. As you sow, so shall you reap. Put very broadly, the fact is that good deeds in one life lead to happy conditions in the next, and bad deeds to unhappy conditions.

A full appreciation of this great and wonderful truth will some day lead to a more cogent theory of morality than any yet adopted for general use. But the subject is great enough to come up for discussion by itself some day, and not merely as illustrating another principle. For the moment, what I want to emphasise is this, that though there would be no justice in the idea that one's life destiny depended on the chance of being born at a moment when the stars were in such and such a configuration, it may be that, owing to the wonderful way in which natural phenomena fit in with one another, if your own former acts,

taken together with the law of justice, have decided that you must have such and such a life; you will *happen* to be born at a moment when other natural facts correspond. Nothing that is entirely natural in its causation is fortuitous. Artificial events depending on human caprice may be, but Nature works systematically.

I can foresee a multitude of difficulties that may be raised in the way of understanding how an event like a birth can be thought of as outside the range of human caprice; but all I have time to say just now is that all such difficulties clear away in the light of a full occult appreciation of the forces at work.

So, if we apply all these considerations to the matter in hand, we shall see where true science comes in to harmonise with much that has stupidly been thought to represent mere superstition, in connection with attempts to read the future of a human being from, say, for example, the lines in his hand. Within broad limits, natural law, hardly more wonderful or mysterious in its operation than those which regulate the interchange of electric and magnetic forces, determines the main events that make the happiness or unhappiness of the person concerned.

Those laws are in harmony with other laws that have determined the bodily configuration of the man. If we thoroughly understood both sets of laws, it would only be necessary to look at a man and to know at once what his character was—what his destiny, on the basis of such and such a character, surroundings, and influences, was going to be. As yet, few of us are in a position to read the Book of Fate so completely, but some of its curious hieroglyphics have been interpreted more or less accurately, and that is at the bottom of the ill-understood and much-derided art of palmistry. Here, again, as in the case of astrology, the verdict of the ignorant majority is as stupid as it is brutal:

"We don't see how anybody can tell what is going to happen to a person by looking at the lines in his hand, so, if anybody pretends to do this, send him to prison."

No doubt, in connection with practical fortune-telling there is an enormous volume of imposture, and I do not say that free scope for misleading their dupes should be granted to all who are disposed to pick up a dishonest living that way, but it is beyond the range of the most resolute scepticism, for all who study the subject, to doubt that there is a connection between the lines of the hand and the conditions of life. Imperfectly as the indications may be understood, the broad facts of people's lives, their health conditions, their wealth and poverty conditions (relatively always to the station in life from which they start), and the general outline of their emotional experiences, are to be read, even by those who merely follow recognised rules, in the markings of the palm. Fools who deny what they do not understand must be left to their folly.

All who will read and experiment in a truly impartial spirit will arrive at the conclusions I have just defined, and, indeed, at conclusions that go much further, for some palmists will go accurately into very minute details of destiny, and be proved right by experience; but when that is done, one must be careful to discriminate between palmistry, pure and simple, and clairvoyance, which is sometimes almost unconsciously combined by fortune-tellers, especially of the gipsy order, with the science, such as it is, of hand-reading. Anyhow, the present attitude of the magisterial mind on the subject of palmistry is a disgrace to modern civilisation. The law is idiotic, of course, but it is no less idiotically interpreted.

CHAPTER X.

FORETELLING THE FUTURE.

WHEN people blunder by accident, so to speak, into the paths of occult research, and first become aware, in their own experience, that things may happen which their previous training made them think impossible, it often seems to upset the balance of their judgment. The boundary between the possible and that which*they have always been accustomed to regard as the impossible, has been broken down. They do not know where to set it up again. So it arises that I often see half-joking, half-credulous conjectures as to wonders that may be perhaps brought about, or as to stories told of something wonderful that is said to have occurred, which no experienced occultist would treat seriously for a moment. In reality, the regions of Nature in which super-physical events take place are just as much under the reign of law as those which have to do with chemistry or electricity. As I grant that these regions are imperfectly explored at present, it may be that they hold many surprises in store for even the most advanced students. But that may be said of any science. Chemistry itself may have surprises in store for us, but, nevertheless, if we are told that some chemist has accomplished some new result, we know, from previous experience, whether such a result lies within^t the domain of regions not yet fully explored, or whether it is in flagrant contradiction with existing knowledge. So with

tales of occult achievement. I could illustrate what I mean in a dozen different ways, but, to begin with, I will deal with theories that are reasonable, and theories which are absurd, in connection with a matter which interests everybody and hinges on to what I was writing about in the last chapter—the problem of foretelling the future.

Palmistry and astrology are only two of the methods that from time to time in the history of the world have been employed with this end in view. Most of my readers will be surprised at the length of the list if I give them a mere imperfect glance at some of the systems adopted in the ancient and mediæval world for getting forecasts of future events. We may read about geomancy, capnomancy, coscinomancy, bibliomancy, belomancy, hydromancy, pyromancy, rādomancy, and many others, not to speak of our more recent cartomancy and cheiromancy. These were all systems of divination which the prigs of the nineteenth century classed together as so much fraud and imposture, in total disregard of facts as well authenticated in many cases as any of history or geography. These were ruled out of court, according to the dictum of “the Fool” in an anecdote I told in Chapter VIII., as events “contrary to the known laws of Nature.” The more intelligent view is that, if events are well authenticated as having occurred, and if they seem at variance with some law we think we understand, there must be some hidden factor in the body of circumstances concerned which altered their significance. I will take an example from the testimony of the first Lord Lytton, who, as everybody who knows anything at all about the history of modern occultism will be aware, was a very earnest student of Nature’s mysteries.

The system of divination which Lord Lytton chiefly made use of was the first on the above list, Geomancy. It would take too long to describe the practical rules of the art, which,

as the name implies, has some supposed connection with movements of the earth, but the "figure" set up to solve any question presented to a geomancist (never mind for a moment the rules by which he sets it up) consists simply of dots or marks irregularly grouped on paper. He reads the significance of these markings according to other rules. In 1860 Lord Lytton put up such a figure to see what would be the future of "Mr Disraeli," as he was then—and, remember, the period was one at which it was still the fashion among Liberals, then predominant in Parliament, to ridicule and despise Disraeli—and long before he had ever been Prime Minister. Lord Lytton was astonished at the significance of the figure. He recorded it as quite out of keeping with any reasonable expectations. It betokened important advantages from marriage, a peaceful hearth, public honours far beyond anticipation, death ultimately in an exceptionally high position, in the midst of general affection and regret. The subject of the inquiry would bequeath a reputation "quite out of proportion to the opinion now (in 1860) entertained of his intellect even by those who think most highly of it. His enemies, though active, will not be persevering; his official friends, though not ardent, will yet minister to his success." The details of this prophecy will be found in the second volume of the second Lord Lytton's life of his father. What is the meaning of such cases, which could be multiplied almost indefinitely? I will give some others from my own experience a little further on, but first I want to suggest some general ideas on all such subjects.

To call such a triumph of divination as that just quoted "coincidence," is the common refuge of stupidity. But it is hopelessly unsatisfactory to attribute a correct divination to the arbitrary markings on paper, which seem all there is to go by. The missing factor in the whole transaction is to

be found in the all but invariable circumstance that the successful diviners, whatever method they become attached to, are "psychics" in a greater or less degree—people who have to some extent, however unconsciously, developed the faculty of clairvoyance, the faculty of taking in perceptions by means of a certain sensibility which we may, for convenience, call a sense not yet generally developed. The external rules of the system employed would be of very little use in the hands of a person who was not in any measure a psychic, and in the hands of a person really so endowed almost any mode of divination will sometimes prove successful. The use of the favourite method, whatever that may be, has the effect of concentrating the attention, of stirring up the activity of the sense in question, so that the tangible things observed become, as it were, fraught with a meaning.

This explains the nasty old habit of the Roman augurs, who got into the habit of inspecting the entrails of birds or animals. Modern wiseacres laugh at the idea that such indications of the future could be found in such casual and dirty combinations. They fail to realise how stupid it is to suppose mankind for a long period going on believing in predictions that never came true. Of course, they sometimes came true—the predictions of the old oracles and diviners—because, however dirty and meaningless in themselves were the methods of divination employed, the more or less effective clairvoyance of the augurs or diviners put them in touch with the foresight which is possible for people whose consciousness can reach that region of Nature which occultists call "the Astral Plane." I have known really accomplished clairvoyants who thoroughly understood all that I am saying now, and a great deal more, who, nevertheless, would cling to some favourite trick, quite meaningless in itself, as a way of starting the activity of the astral senses. Looking in a crystal ball is one such method. The ordinary

man might look for a month and see nothing, but I know several persons (quite unknown to fame, and not "professional") who never look in a crystal for a minute without beginning to see visions of one sort or another. One most genuine clairvoyant of my acquaintance had a trick of gazing intently at the bits of tea leaf at the bottom of a cup as a means of stimulating the astral sense. Arabs of old who watched the flight of arrows (Belomancy), and the modern water-finders who use a hazel twig, and seem to feel it turn in their hands when they come over a hidden spring, are in the same way stimulating clairvoyance.

The human goose who thinks they must be "humbugging" because he cannot see the connection between a hazel twig and an underground spring, is doubly stupid. First, there is no contradiction to any really known law in the theory that there *may* be some such connection (though I do not say there is), but, secondly, the fact that water-finders do succeed in locating hidden springs is perfectly well authenticated, while the idea that this can be done by persons gifted with the necessary amount of clairvoyance is no more unreasonable than to suppose that a person with a sufficiently good ear can play a tune he has heard on the piano. I will go more fully into that water-finding business later on, but just now I want to keep to the kind of clairvoyance that has to do with foretelling the future.

The painful embarrassment we have to face in dealing with this matter arises from the apparent necessity of admitting—if we admit that the future can be foretold—the horrible idea that we are under the dominion of some terrible fate that makes every misfortune or sorrow that befalls us inevitable! To believe that the future can ever be foretold seems equivalent to saying that all future events must be determined by some appalling destiny beforehand; that if we do foolish things, or commit crimes even, those

acts were inevitable! We seem drifted in this way into the worst horrors of Mohammedan fatalism. No such grievous conclusions need be drawn from the fullest possible recognition of that which to me, and to all who have made the matter a study, is a certain fact, that very often future events are foreseen; that not infrequently prophetic dreams "come true," and that often the crystal, or even the tea-cup, in competent hands will give warning of trouble, or sometimes promise joys that in progress of time actually come to pass.

The apparent contradiction is explained in this way. In that state of consciousness which we call in occult terminology "being on the Astral Plane," or "reading in the Astral Light," the inevitable result of any body of causes then in operation—that is to say, the effect they would have if nothing happens to disturb them—can be perceived in a way impossible down here. A humble analogy may be derived from the position of the man on a ladder looking over a maze in which holiday-makers are wandering about and trying to find their way. In the midst of the twists and obstacles they cannot tell at any given moment whether they are pursuing a path that will enable them to get out, or running up a cul-de-sac. But the man on the ladder can see quite plainly. He can see the obstacle or clear path, as the case may be, which is veiled from their sight; therefore he can foretell whether they will go on or very soon be turned back. In the same way, though the complication of the process is greater, the clairvoyant, seeking to follow out the progress of events, sees what must happen, if things are left to themselves, from the operation of the body of causes in existence at any given moment.

But here we are not in presence of an unalterable set of facts like the obstacles in a maze, but are dealing with alterable conditions affected by the human will. Most generally

it will happen that, by reason of their blindness to the tendency of subtle causes affecting human affairs, people do nothing to alter the course of events in such cases as I am imagining, and then the prophetic vision, the forecast of the clairvoyant, or the dream, as it may sometimes be, is justified by the event, and "comes true," as the phrase goes. Where the person concerned is himself sufficiently alive to the true meaning of a prophecy as to avail himself of the warning it may convey, he very likely *does* do something to import a new factor into the transaction, and then the event does not come off. That does not invalidate the accuracy of the prophecy. It merely puts the person concerned to that extent in the position of one who has soared above the commonplace conditions of life, and has become, in a certain small degree, a power in the world, not merely a straw borne on the waves of circumstance.

The life of a very remarkable clairvoyant, the late Mrs Anna Kingsford, whose most interesting memoirs have been written by her friend and collaborator, Mr Edward Maitland, will furnish us with examples of both kinds of prevision. In dreams chiefly, but in other ways as well, Mrs Kingsford was continually getting forecasts of future events in which ~~she~~ herself was involved. Many of them would be quite trivial, for it is not the importance of an event that will lead to its prevision, rather the condition of the clairvoyant at the time. In one such case within my own knowledge at the time, as I had the pleasure of her acquaintance, she told friends with whom she was staying just then that she had seen herself, in vision, in a hansom cab surrounded by soldiers, and apparently in the midst of some scene of fighting or disorder. No sense could be made of the forecast, but it chanced that the very next day, being in a hansom cab, after calling at a club in Pall Mall to leave a message for one of its members, she was

driven rapidly round the corner of Marlborough House and full tilt into the midst of the Guards just marching off the scene of the usual ceremony in the courtyard of St James's Palace. Her unintentional charge threw the column for a moment into disorder. Bayonets were flashing in the sun, the cab horse was on his haunches, and the insignificant scene of the vision was thus realised. Nothing serious happened. The whole transaction was of no importance; but she chanced to have sensed the causes leading up to it on the astral plane, and nothing was done to interfere with the result.

In another case, when in Paris, she had caught out a maid-servant in some serious delinquencies. She was very angry, and resolved to prosecute the girl. With this fixed intention in her mind, she slept that night, and dreamed that she saw herself turning the corner of a street in Paris and meeting a woman who threw vitriol in her face. She woke with the sting of the acid, as it were, burning her cheeks. She took the warning, and did *not* prosecute the girl, and the alarming vision never was fulfilled. These are merely two examples out of many that might be quoted from the experiences of the remarkable woman I have named, and from the experience of others less known to fame I could quote other similar cases.

Before dropping the subject, I may as well say a few words on the deplorable manner in which some people sometimes aim at utilising the possibility that the future may be foretold. There are people who would not hesitate, if they thought it possible, to get occult information as to what horse is going to win the Derby, or what stocks are going to rise or fall. Like every other contingency depending on causes in operation, such events are, in a certain sense, foretellable, because there are few persons concerned with their realisation who will be likely to have such know-

ledge as would enable them to import fresh causes into the combination. But there are two difficulties in the way of degrading the arts of divination to the service of such purposes as those I have indicated. First of all, some of the persons whose apparent free-will is engaged in the business may accidentally swerve from the line of action along which they are being projected by the pressure of circumstances. To discuss that point fully would lead me into the depths of metaphysics, but it is enough to say that such events, as foreseen from the height of astral vision, are liable to disturbance—like all others, indeed. But, secondly—and this is a consideration of greater practical importance—no clairvoyant of the higher order would consent to be engaged in the investigation of such problems. That would involve a degradation of exalted faculties from which every high-minded occultist would shrink, while anyone who might be described as a low-minded occultist would probably not be sufficiently advanced to be guarded against the infinite variety of confusing and erroneous visions with which the astral plane is, necessarily saturated. But that is “another story,” and must be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

BEHIND THE SCENES OF NATURE.

IN a rude and humble sort of fashion the arrangements of a theatre are designed in unconscious imitation of Nature's operations in this living world around us. Effects on the stage are presented to the audience, but the machinery by which they are brought about is carefully concealed from view. The visible stage may seem roomy and profound, and the artful devices of the painter may suggest an infinite perspective ; but much nearer, really, than the distant hills of the stage picture are the pulleys and ropes that control the shifting scenes. Unsuspected mechanism lurks above and below, and, besides the actors in front of the footlights, many other players of unrecorded parts must be actively at work all the time, or the dawn which has to break over the landscape would not appear at the right moment ; the thunder shower, necessary to the progress of the piece, would fail to keep its appointment, and the best sensations of the melodrama might culminate in the shame of the managers. So with the vast proscenium on which the drama of human destiny is worked out ; the play could not go on for a day—not for a minute—unless there were countless unseen agencies, many of them quite as intelligent as, or much more so than, those who “strut and fret their hour upon the stage,” busily engaged all the time in working the machinery.

A deeper truth than even he intended is involved in the words Lord Bacon used (playing a part himself, and disguised as Shakespeare) when he said, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." There are many aspects of the infinite subject I am handling that cannot even be referred to without constant allusion to the unseen agencies so busily at work, and I propose now to give some account of the all-important functions they discharge in Nature, and of the unseen realms in which they carry on their activity. I say "realms" in the plural advisedly, because it would be a fatal mistake to imagine that all "behind the scenes of Nature" is merely one region stocked with the whole mass of machinery which produces the visible effects. There is really region behind region, stretching up to infinity, for that matter, and fading away into the incomprehensible, into that which for ages to come must be the "Unknowable" for most of us; but the fundamental blunder of primitive thinking in connection with these profound mysteries is that which divides Nature into the plainly visible phenomena of everyday life, and a veiled unfathomable region of causation into which it is supposed the consciousness of embodied humanity can never hope to penetrate.

Occult students have penetrated so far into this region that they, in turn, are liable to fall into the mistake of thinking that the whole machinery of the Cosmos is accessible to their investigation. This is far from being the actual state of the case, but none the less is the knowledge we are in a position to obtain so greatly more abundant than that which lies open to mere physical research, that we are at least able to feel quite at home in realms that are, at all events, well behind the scenes of familiar visible manifestation, and can account for a great deal that seems at the first glance utterly beyond the range of the human understanding.

For the present I shall merely attempt to speak of the region which lies immediately behind the visible world—just as much belonging to the world as its atmosphere. That region is spoken of in occult language as “the Astral Plane.” The term is not a good one, because it seems to suggest some association with the stars, though no such meaning is really involved. The phrase, however, has been used for hundreds of years by writers on occult subjects all through the middle ages, and we cannot throw it aside now. Again, the word “plane” is not a very happy one, because it seems to suggest a flat surface, and that idea must be utterly cleaned out of the mind before we can begin to think of the astral plane correctly. If we who study occultism, my readers may ask, do not like our own phrases, why do we use them? The trouble is that the language does not supply words that precisely fit occult emergencies.

How, for instance, shall we call this region of Nature, of which I want now to speak, by any really appropriate name? It is a condition of things that in some aspects suggests the idea of an envelope surrounding the earth, but then it interpenetrates the earth as well as surrounding it, just as (or much more thoroughly than) water penetrates the pores of a wet sponge. It is infused in all matter, as a salt dissolved in water exists in association with all its molecules. An accepted dictum of occult science tells us that every particle of physical matter has its “astral counterpart.” It is through that astral counterpart that all the natural forces controlling its growth or development, whatever that may be, are exerted.

For the most part, ordinary people have no direct consciousness of the astral plane, but dreams often bring them into some relation with it. Dreams have, indeed, a very mixed constitution. I shall have a good deal to say about them some day, but meanwhile, be it understood, when the

body is asleep, the consciousness of the person concerned is really, in most cases, in touch with the astral plane, though, unless he is gifted with "psychic" attributes, he perceives its phenomena very imperfectly. We all have organisms adapted to consciousness on, or with, reference to, *all* the planes of Nature; but most of us at this stage of human evolution have got no more than an astral body in an undeveloped state, not much better ready to work with than the body of a blind kitten a few days old is ready to catch mice. The race will greatly improve in this respect by degrees, but, so far, the people who can exercise consciousness on the astral plane quite completely are few, and that is how the many (when, besides being backward in evolution, they are conceited enough to think they are in its van) are so comically contemptuous about the knowledge that the (relatively) few possess.

Imagine a country isolated from the rest of the world, in which all the people from time immemorial had been born deaf. Life would have adapted itself to that condition of things. People would communicate by signs, and would have become so skilful at that as to be under no sense of restriction. Then suppose, one by one, a few of them began to hear. The early possessors of the incomprehensible faculty would not have a very good time of it among their friends. If they pretended to be able to communicate with one another through an opaque screen, the sober, common-sense majority would know quite well that they were cheating, though it might be difficult to detect the fraud. If they pretended to "hear" a gun fired at a distance, the one thing certain would be—if it turned out, on inquiry, that a gun really had been fired—that they had bribed the man who fired it to shoot at a pre-arranged moment. The "hearers" would be unanimously voted liars or victims of hallucination, and they would be apt to

give up talking about the new discoveries they had made, until, indeed, they became numerous enough to laugh, in their turn, at the old-fashioned deaf mutes, or, perhaps, to do their best to share with the more intelligent of those same deaf mutes the advantages of their acquired sense.

That idea would really parallel the present condition of modern society in regard to the phenomena of the astral plane, and the time has happily come when those who have astral faculties are numerous enough to support one another in amused indifference to the jeers of the ignorant "deaf mutes," and sufficiently impressed with a sense of duty to their contemporaries to describe their discoveries openly for the benefit of all who want to grow. For, in truth, the faculties of astral perception will not grow, as the blind kitten's eyes eventually open, quite of their own accord. The appreciative and aspiring mind must bring certain influences to bear on the process—but that is, indeed, another story—as long as we are still standing on the threshold of the astral plane, realising for the first time, as we look at the tableau on the stage, that there is a wealth of machinery behind the scenes by which it is all brought about.

The first most glaring fact about the astral plane for those who become endowed with the faculty of perception with reference to it, is that there we come into relation again with a large majority of the people who have recently died. For them, it is true, it is but an ante-chamber to higher conditions of existence, but it is an ante-chamber in which they will sometimes be kept waiting a long time. The astral bodies in which they find themselves functioning will be just the same in substance as those which they possessed, without knowing anything about it, during physical life; and at first, truth to tell, for undeveloped

people it is a very imperfect vehicle of consciousness. But for everyone it soon wakes up more or less, and in proportion to the extent that this happens (under the mental and moral influences engendered during life), the enjoyment of the astral period of existence is very significantly affected. But I must not be tempted to go into that matter fully just now, because the main point I have in view is the justification of the broad idea concerning the astral plane, with which I started.

It is the region that may be described as behind the scenes of Nature, not merely because the actors who have just left the stage are to be found there, but because there are other—"people" shall I say?—entities, at all events, who have never been on the stage at all, but are entirely concerned with controlling the machinery, and these are known to occultists as "elemental spirits" or "elementals." They are countless as the sands of the seashore; they vary in efficiency, in degrees of growth, in individuality, as widely as the whole animal kingdom on the physical earth varies. The elementals are the agencies through whose intermediation much of the work of Nature on the physical plane is carried out. In some of their aspects they may be thought of as forces, operative, with scarcely any individual initiative, modifying (rather than giving rise to) the growth of plants and the activities of the inorganic world. In the higher departments of their work they participate in the guidance of even human affairs; and in some cases the human will, developed to the higher degrees of its potentiality, controls them in turn, and so brings about the otherwise unexplainable phenomena concerned with material objects that so perplex the reason at some spiritual *séances*.

Spiritualists generally are apt to attribute such phenomena to the direct agency of their departed friends, but this is a mistake that the more scientific occultist does not fall into.

The departed friend, during his sojourn on the astral plane, may acquire knowledge, by means of which he can, within certain limits, induce or control elemental beings to subserve his wishes as regards working wonderful phenomena for the instruction or delectation of his late companions still in the earth life; but, more commonly, startling physical phenomena are produced—through elemental agency—by entities, who, for that matter, may have been at no very remote period in the past in earth life themselves, but who have been regularly instructed by higher entities, of whom it would be premature to speak more definitely just yet, to play the part of “spirit guides.” The complications of the subject lead me continually to brush the surface of fresh mysteries, which readers who follow these expositions systematically will come to know a good deal more about in time.

We must not think of the elementals, however, as being only concerned with working wonders. They are able to do this because it is their function in Nature to work out the ordinary processes of growth, development, and decay, of meteorological phenomena, of combustion, of earthquake disturbances, of everything that happens in the natural world. Do not let anyone imagine for a moment that these results and processes are due to their volition. The elemental, as a rule, has no volition. He? It? They?—one does not know what pronoun to employ in dealing with such unfamiliar activities—are the means by which, in obedience to sublimely-exalted volition, the business of Nature is carried on. Occultism does not dethrone the Deity, be it always remembered; quite the contrary. But suppose some reverent savage were to be content to say, with reference to a locomotive engine, for instance, it is the will of the driver that makes it go! A more intelligent inquirer would want to understand how his will was transmitted

to the wheels, and he would find the intermediate "elementals" in the boiler and the fire-box. That is the principle on which the occultist studies Nature, and the boiler is to the engine what the astral plane and its marvellous population of elementals is to the world in which we live.

CHAPTER XII.

STRANGE TALES AND THEIR MEANING.

By the light of what we know now concerning the machinery in operation behind the scenes of Nature, tales of what used to be called "supernatural" occurrences acquire a new meaning. The profound incredulity, arising from profound ignorance, with which all so-called "ghost stories" used to be received in the middle of the last century has given way of late, and the new interest excited by such narratives in the present day is evidence of a changing opinion as to their authenticity. The manner in which modern novels are saturated with incidents having to do with mesmerism, visions, and even good old thoroughgoing ghosts, would alone be enough to show how greatly the attitude of the public mind in reference to such ideas has been modified. Fifty years ago no novelist would have dared to introduce an apparently supernatural occurrence without having a materialistic explanation in the background. Now, on the contrary, no writer of fiction would offend modern taste by pretending to explain away the ghostly imaginings round which his plot may turn. But the ordinary novelist merely plays up to the vague modern conviction in reference to the supernatural, that there is "something in it" after all. He very rarely studies the subject closely enough to make his fictitious ghost story fit in with the real science of Nature's mysteries, even so far as some of us have been able to

formulate this. The "psychic" element in most novels, therefore, is trashy and uninteresting from the point of view of the occult student. On the other hand, the new feeling about all such matters tends to encourage people who have real experiences to make them public, and though the real happenings may, to the untaught multitude, seem just as bewildering as those of the novelist's imagination, they often wear a very different complexion for the student.

I propose, therefore, to go over a few such real experiences, in order to point out how they fit in with the account I gave in the last chapter of the "elemental" machinery to be observed, by those who know how to look for it, behind the scenes of Nature. These experiences will not be examples of the familiar ghost story. The natural history of the ghost is interesting enough, but he is generally no more than the "soul," to use a popular but unscientific expression, of some deceased person then inhabiting an astral body, lingering for a time in what I have called the ante-chambers of the next world, and—if seen by any person not gifted with astral senses—partially "materialised" under conditions perfectly well understood by occultists. Perhaps it will be useful another time to go into the natural history of the poor, ill-treated, and sometimes unhappy ghost more fully, but just now I want to illustrate what I have lately been saying about the elemental agencies of the astral plane by dealing with occurrences directly traceable to such agency, and having little or nothing to do with the activities of deceased human beings.

I will take first a case within my own knowledge where the abnormal occurrences concerned have no terrifying character, but, on the contrary, are innocent and pleasing, and have rather a pretty interpretation when properly understood. A friend of mine belongs to a family in which a peculiar strain of music, emanating from no physical instru-

ment, is heard by the heir whenever any member of the family is about to die. My friend himself has heard it, and it is recognised by a long-standing tradition in the family. Investigation into this matter, with the help of very sublime and advanced clairvoyant resources, has unveiled the mystery. It seems that many centuries ago an ancestor of that family was a Crusader of very pious character. He had a beloved son with him at the war, but the son was *not* of a pious character by any means, and he was killed in battle, unshriven, unforgiven by the Church, with all his sins upon his head. His orthodox father was left lamenting, not merely his death, but his certain post-mortem condemnation, under the circumstances (according to the stupid theological superstitions of the period), to eternal hell-fire. The father, in his grief, forsook the world and became a hermit, and he passed the rest of his life in a constant agony of prayer that no descendant of his again might be hurried to his death without a warning.

Now I have already explained that under some circumstances the elemental powers of Nature can be controlled by the human will (within limits), and protracted, intense desire, even on the part of untaught people, may be as operative in this direction as the trained will of an accomplished occultist. Without knowing what he was doing, the unhappy father of the old Crusading period "created," as the occult phrase goes, "an artificial elemental," with only one duty to perform, that of giving a warning to someone in the line of his descendants when a death was about to take place in the family. Does the task strike our imagination as rather monotonous for the entity concerned? The answer is that such an "entity"—if the word is applicable, which it hardly is—has no more individual consciousness than the force of gravitation. Imagine a clock weight wound up and required to do nothing but strike one every fifty

years or so. Assuming that the mechanism did not get rusty or clogged with dirt—and elemental mechanism is not liable to that contingency—the weight would operate for centuries before it had entirely run down. That is exactly the position of affairs in regard to the “Banshee,” as the Irish would call such a phenomenon as that in question. It will no doubt go on playing its little tune, when required, for centuries to come.

But it does not always happen that an artificial elemental is created by a *benevolent* thought. Elemental force in its nature is neither good nor evil, no more than fire or electricity is good or evil. It can, like any other of the agencies of Nature, be turned to good or evil purposes, and whenever we hear of curses that have given rise to recurrent effects of a painful or fatal character, an artificial elemental is evidently at work under the guidance of some malevolent impulse, as powerful in the beginning as the benevolent impulse of the hermit in the last story. I came into touch with the facts of one such realised curse while in India some years ago. In the Eastern world the powers which enable living people to control elemental forces are somewhat more frequently encountered than in this country.

At a certain station a new military cantonment was being formed about thirty years ago from now. The Government granted the officers money to enable them to build bungalows. Three friends chose a certain spot near the river on which to build theirs. Before they began they were accosted one day by a ragged, dirty Fakir, who begged them, meekly enough at first, to select another site, as the piece of ground chosen was sacred. They merely laughed at him and his “absurd superstitions,” as they would have regarded the matter. The Fakir’s entreaties were repeated, but the friends began to build. Then the Fakir grew angry and excited, and cursed the officers, declaring that they

would all die violent deaths, and that the house they were building would be razed to the ground.

Secure behind the ramparts of nineteenth-century wisdom, the officers laughed again. But shortly afterwards one of them paid the appointed penalty at a polo match. His pony cannoned against another, he himself was pitched off on his head, and never recovered consciousness. Next year the second catastrophe followed. One of the two survivors was killed in the same way as the first victim, by a fall from his horse—thrown upon his head and killed on the spot. The third man concerned lived to come home to England for a visit, but he returned to India at the expiration of his leave, and was upset—in company with a friend—from a boat on the Ganges. He was a good swimmer and his friend an indifferent one, but the friend got safely to shore, while he himself was never seen again—whether sucked down by an eddy or seized by an alligator remains unknown. Finally, at the next rainy season the river was in high flood, and the ill-fated bungalow on its banks was washed away.

Occurrences of this nature are rarely regarded in the right light. The thick-headed, commonplace person says: "How curious!" or "What an odd coincidence!"—never stopping to calculate the millions to one that stand against the possibility that any such coincidences can be due to chance, or the gross absurdity of supposing them due to chance when they are multiplied in number. Only the other day I heard of a relatively trifling example of the same sort of experience. An English resident in India, moving to a new station, found his "khansamah"—the man who plays the part of housekeeper in an Indian establishment—charging him in his weekly accounts with the equivalent of a shilling for "sacrifice to the demon."

Greatly amused, but unwilling to be "done" in that transparent fashion, the Englishman asked for particulars.

It appeared that a certain tree in the garden of that house was sacred to, or haunted by, an elemental, who never gave any trouble as long as certain compliments were paid him in the shape of rice and other trifles offered up to the tree. The Englishman marvelled at the imbecility of the superstition, and peremptorily stopped the "demon's" shilling a week. Inquiry had fully satisfied him that the food was really sacrificed, and that his first suspicion crediting the khansamah with peculation was unfounded. The servants murmured, but the master would not carry on with idiotic nonsense. Soon petty troubles began. Strange and unaccountable noises pervaded the house. Watch was set, but no human trickery could be detected. Irritated, but amenable to the lessons of experience, the master resumed payments of the weekly shilling. All disturbances came to an end.

Then he found that the tree in question had straggled inconveniently, and ordered his people to cut off an ugly branch. Not one of them dared. Two strangers were employed to do this. The branch, a fine piece of timber, was afterwards used to support the rope over a well that was being sunk. The two men employed in sinking the well were the same who had cut off the branch. This was apparently quite sound, capable of supporting a much greater weight than theirs, but it broke with them, and they were both killed, for wells in India are deep—over 60 feet in the thick alluvial plain of the Ganges valley. I could go on with many other similar tales that I believe to be actual narratives of fact. They are common about India, and Mr Anstey's amusing but absurd story, *The Fallen Idol*, is a ridiculous caricature of incidents that have really happened. The "demon," or elemental, concerned in such tales may belong to any one of thousands of different classes of such—what shall we call them?—Creatures? Entities? Beings? Things? All such terms

are equally inappropriate, but the natural facts behind the results of their activity are as real as London Bridge or the Marble Arch.

Some clue to the correct way of thinking about them may be reached if we begin by pondering on this idea: Force, on the astral plane, is not merely force—as momentum, gravity, heat, and so on, are forces with us—but is semi-intelligent. Here you can, using the explosive force of gunpowder, shoot a bullet at a mark. On the astral plane you can shoot (the equivalent of) a bullet at any person who at some future time may do some particular thing. The equivalent of the bullet is the elemental, which, once charged with a certain purpose, will fulfil that purpose under the conditions provided for at any future time. You must not think of the elemental as patient. There is no consciousness to be the subject of impatience. The point simply is that astral plane forces are very different in their nature from those that are in everyday use on the physical plane.

This deep, wonderful, natural truth lay at the bottom of all the "witchcraft" of the middle ages. The nineteenth century, in its silly wisdom, has declared that witchcraft was all nonsense. Mr Lecky somewhere records the curious fact that the *evidence* for the reality of witchcraft is simply overwhelming; but he (faithful child of his generation!) merely says this shows how fallible human testimony is, *because* we know that witchcraft was all nonsense!

A book was lately published, called *Princes and Poisoners*, about the strange doings of various nefarious kinds that went on at the Court of Louis XIV. In those days wicked priests (for pay) would perform what was called "the black Mass." It was a frightfully impious ceremonial, and rather an indecent one as well; but ladies of the Court would sometimes stoop to it, in order to compass the downfall or death of a rival. Mme. de Montespan, it seems, had

a black Mass said to the prejudice of Mme. de Fontanges when that lady cut her out in the affections of the King. By a "curious coincidence," Mme. de Fontanges died immediately afterwards! No doubt many black Masses were said quite fruitlessly, but granted a sufficiently bitter and intense hatred to vivify the ceremonial, and very likely an artificial elemental may sometimes have been created.

Can wicked people be allowed, some piously-minded person may ask, to get behind the scenes of Nature and play such pranks as these with forces apparently suited only for the service of divine wisdom? The occult view of the whole providential design is not embarrassed by that question, but it would require a long answer. For the moment it may be enough to point out that savages who want to hurt one another are allowed to use bows and arrows, but are forbidden the use of fire-arms—till somebody invents them. Then they are allowed later on to get as far as dynamite and lyddite shells. When the civilised man at last realises that the unseen forces are more powerful still, it will be his right to misuse these in turn, until he hurts himself in so doing badly enough to learn a higher kind of wisdom than any that is widely prevalent as yet. The arts of controlling natural forces are destined to an expansion for which the imagination of only a few amongst us is as yet prepared.

CHAPTER XIII.

MORE STRANGE TALES.

HITHERTO, unhappily, most people have regarded such stories as I was telling in the last chapter as merely so much entertaining fiction—fairy tales to while away an idle hour—and so they have failed to promote the advancement of natural knowledge, just as the railway trains that pass across the landscape fail to improve the minds of the cows that gaze on them from the fields. Properly regarded, they are, on the contrary, so much experimental fact which ought to be worked up into theories—provisional theories in the first instance—which can then be made the basis for further definite and designed experiment, calculated to check the tentative conjectures and to lead gradually in that way to the evolution of a science of the Unseen. Of course, it is of the foremost importance to sift out, with adequate care the real facts from the mass of decorated, embroidered, or altogether imaginary stories that are served up for the purposes of mere amusement, but that is not so very difficult a task, and it has been conscientiously undertaken in connection with some varieties of abnormal experience by the well-known Society for Psychical Research.

There are now in existence several thick volumes full of records dealing with thought-transference (a species of clairvoyance), with the appearance to distant friends of persons at the point of death, and so on, all of which are solid data

on which we can legitimately found theories. The society in question has preferred to work at very simple problems of occult mystery, with the idea, perhaps, of preparing the public mind for the reception of unfamiliar truth; or, perhaps, the society's own mind was not at first prepared for deeper investigations. But I refer to the work it has done, rather to illustrate the proper method of carrying out such inquiries than for the sake of what has, so far, been actually done along those lines, and I propose to go on now with certain authentic records of fact, which may help us to understand something concerning the operations of those unseen powers behind the scenes of Nature which must be taken into account in all efforts to unravel mysteries that involve something more than mere communication with deceased friends.

The story I am about to tell has come to me under circumstances that, for my satisfaction, at any rate, guarantee its authenticity. But just because it deals with real people, real places, and real experiences of a very thrilling kind, I must, in recounting the facts, so disguise them, that the persons concerned may not be subjected to any inquisitive annoyance. I shall alter nothing in the narrative of their experiences which is essential to a comprehension of the facts as data for reasoning about elemental influence.

In this country—England—at the present time, there is to be found, for those who know where to seek it, a deserted manor house that has been uninhabited for more than fifty years—I do not know for how much more—by reason of gruesome experiences that have befallen persons connected with the place. The tradition is, that persons who merely intrude upon its precincts are liable to startling and disagreeable consequences, and that those who actually touch certain Objects—I might be giving a clue to the locality if I described them more precisely—will come to dire grief within a very short time. It is not easy for daring explorers

to get permission to visit the place, for the owners keep it scrupulously shut up, and are reluctant to allow rash wonder-seekers to confront what they know to be its inexplicable dangers.

Within recent years a man I know, then tenant of a country house in the neighbourhood, was entertaining a small party of friends from London. One of them had heard of the deserted house, and wished to go and see it. The idea was not cordially welcomed by his host, but at length, after giving a solemn promise that he would not touch the Objects, the necessary authority was obtained in his favour from the owners of the place. He went, accompanied by a young man belonging to a family living at another house in the neighbourhood. He returned just in time to get ready for dinner, full of the intense and extraordinary interest of the old place and of the aspect presented by the wilderness around, untouched for generations. "You did not touch the Objects?" his host asked. "Well, of course not, because I gave you my promise that I would not, but it was not necessary; they are in a glass case, and So-and-So and I merely just lifted the case to the light to see its contents more clearly, and put it back again." The more experienced host was by no means pleased to hear that even this had been done, but there was nothing more to be said for the moment. During dinner the daring personage was cheerful and well. Afterwards he pleaded fatigue and went up early to his room.

Presently there were cries and a disturbance upstairs. A servant came hastily to announce that something had happened, and when the host and others hurried up, the guest who had visited the deserted house was found lying on the floor of his room in a fit of a very alarming character, his limbs all rigid and his eyes turned back in his head, and, of course, utterly unconscious. Everything that

the knowledge of those around could suggest was done for him. When the doctor, sent for in all haste, at last came, he could propose nothing further, but gave no hope that the patient would live. As a matter of fact, he did live. Towards morning a faint flutter of returning consciousness was manifest, and eventually he recovered from the illness which followed the fit. The day after the adventure the host had occasion to send to the house where his friend's companion of the previous day resided. The answer came back to the effect: "We can't attend to anything. Young So-and-So has been giving us an awful night. He has had a frightful fit; we thought he was dead, and only this morning has he shown signs of life."

One might suppose that people to whom these occurrences were known would rather avoid visiting the deserted house, but some people, attracted to the Unseen, are braver than is wise in confronting perils that they do not understand. I know somebody who, even after hearing of the occurrences just related, and knowing the people concerned, or some of them, persisted in having a look at the mysterious house and its surroundings. He did not touch the Objects or the case containing them, but none the less, on returning from his visit, he was driven to bed by a puzzling and painful illness that kept him there for a week or ten days, though he is a more than ordinarily healthy man, to whom such an experience was quite a novelty.

~~Now~~ Now for the scientific value of all these painful happenings. We could not begin to formulate anything like a complete theory of the forces at work behind the scenes to bring about such distressing results as those described, without knowing a good deal more than I have been able to gather concerning the original tragedy with which the dangerous Objects are mixed up. But it is evident, for various reasons, that they were connected with more than

one violent death, brought about in the midst of intense and embittered anger. What was the exact nature of the sin and suffering that led to the anger I do not know, but we do know enough of the machinery of the astral plane, on general principles, to feel sure that the present-day bequests of that suffering or anger do not come directly from the conscious intent of any exhuman being or deceased person still living in consciousness on the astral plane. Somehow or other, elemental forces, concentrated, consolidated—as it were, evoked from an ocean of harmless energy, but inspired with a malevolent purpose—have, at some stage of the original tragedy, come into existence, with results of the very threatening character described.

Thought, imagination, will, are creative potencies on the plane of Nature permeated with that ocean of available energy, though at present very few persons of our rank in evolution know how to control such energies. These essays will not teach them how. The art does not depend upon getting possessed of some specific secret, but on processes of interior growth that require time and sacrifices few people of our generation would be willing to make. But a fairly accurate intellectual comprehension of the facts as they really stand is within the grasp of all who are amenable to the lessons of experience, and capable of drawing inferences. Such comprehension will lead up to a view of life and Nature that will pave the way for human progress of a grander order than anything yet generally anticipated.

Will and imagination are, as I have said, creative powers, and some time in the future these powers will be understood and exercised on a grand scale for beneficent purposes; but, so far, it does not often happen that will is exercised with sufficient concentration of purpose, with sufficient intensity, to operate on elemental forces and direct their action. So far, people only create "artificial elementals" at rare inter-

vals when they happen to be under the influence of an extraordinarily intense passion or desire, and at the present stage of human evolution such intense feeling is more apt, unhappily, to be excited by anger, suffering, or wild fury of hate, than by the impulses of benevolence. That is how it happens that we are more often startled by cases of the kind I have been relating than by corresponding tales in which elemental agency has been employed to do good; but the true moral of my little stories would be missed entirely if it were supposed that their only purpose is to alarm people about unseen dangers around them, of whose very existence they have hitherto been unaware. Their moral is that such agencies exist, and that they can be turned to good or evil account according to the character of the human influence by which they are animated in the first instance.

They often manifest themselves, indeed, under conditions in which no question arises as to whether they are evil or good. In the mysterious entanglement of forces that give rise to the physical phenomena of spiritual *séances*, elemental agency is nearly always at work, prompted by competent entities on the astral plane, to exhibit powers that serve to impress the persons present with the reality of superphysical force. Thus I have myself seen, at a spiritual *séance*, heavy, solid objects brought into the room in a way that set equally at defiance the "known laws of Nature" (as familiar to the ignorant majority), and all suspicion of possible trickery. In the case I am particularly thinking of as I write, the *séance* was held in an upper room in a private house in Kensington, inhabited by a lady who was not a *professional* medium, though one of extraordinary potentialities. Owing to the violent character of the manifestations constantly taking place there, the *séance* room was kept empty of all furniture except a bare table

round which we sat, and the few chairs required by the sitters. The floor was bare, there was one window only, which I myself, on the occasion in question, helped to cover with a massive screw-down shutter, and one door, which could not be opened without letting in light from the hall below.

Within a few seconds from the time when we had taken our seats—the party consisting of eight or ten persons—we were conscious of some violent manifestations going forward. I felt water sprinkling about, and I was brushed, or lightly hit, by some unknown things, and a general cry arose for a light to let us see what was happening. A light was struck at once, and the room was found covered with the branches of trees, freshly torn off at the ends, wet with the slight rain that was falling outside—more of them than any one man could have carried in his arms. How did such things get into the room through solid walls, through the closed door, or through the massive shutter covering the window? The facts are so hopelessly unintelligible that commonplace people take refuge in a silly denial of the testimony of those who were present—perhaps in some idiotic suggestion that the ladies present must have brought the branches in hidden under their petticoats.

Though very striking, the incident is in no way embarrassing to those who are familiar with the possibilities of elemental agency. Superphysical science is, as yet, so little understood, that the very terms one has to make use of, in explaining such a transaction as that under notice, are themselves unintelligible. The tree branches were “disintegrated” by the elementals concerned, or by the elemental force directed by conscious entities on the “other side,” as the phrase is, in which condition they pass as easily through solid walls or any other kind of matter, as the particles projected by the Röntgen ray pass through

glass. But the particles of the disintegrated object are only, so to speak, held apart by the force employed. They have a natural tendency to come together again in their former shape, so all that has to be done, after they have been disintegrated, is to set up a nucleus of reintegration at some place, wherever that may be, at which it is desired that they shall resume their former shape, and the rest happens of its own accord. On another occasion, at the same place, I saw a mass of ice weighing several pounds dropped down on the table with a startling crash. The same explanation is operative.

Spiritualists are too often indifferent to the scientific value of the wonderful occurrences they encounter, and simply go on enjoying the excitement of witnessing them, without attempting to reduce them to order and intellectual significance. Thus all such physical manifestations as I have described are often vaguely set down to the account of "the spirits," without any further effort being made to relate them to other mysteries of Nature, or bring them within any broad scheme of general theory. This can only be done, indeed, with the help of other methods of investigation besides those of the *séance* room. But that is too mighty a branch of my subject to be opened out at the close of an essay, concerned with other matters.

CHAPTER XIV.

"MIRACULOUS" (?) CURES.

I WANT now to turn aside from the main current of thought I have been following hitherto, in order to throw some light on a subject very imperfectly comprehended, as a rule, by people who do not make any special study of occultism, but one which can be made, at any rate, partially intelligible without much difficulty. I refer to all those so-called "miraculous" cures of disease reported to take place at Roman Catholic shrines sometimes (and laughed at by ignorant people), alleged also to be brought about by the methods of a certain "sect," if one may so describe them, calling themselves "Christian Scientists," and, furthermore, recorded with vast amplitude of detail in the innumerable books on mesmerism. Here we are in touch with a branch of occult research that has practical interest for everybody. If, to use the public's favourite phrase, there is "anything in it" as regards the actual relief of bodily suffering by simple methods of which, as yet, the doctors as a rule know nothing, then, indeed, people who may not feel drawn to study occultism for its own enchanting sake alone, may see that it is worth while to grapple with such problems seriously.

Mesmerism is the fundamental process to be considered first in connection with the cure of disease by methods which are not those of ordinary medicine, and if anyone in the present age of the world doubts whether mesmeric

processes ever have cured diseases, he differs only in degree, not in kind, from the natives of equatorial Africa, who doubt whether it is true that water can be made to grow cold enough to turn solid. There is no department of human folly so curiously significant as that which has been concerned during the past century with suppressing, denying, and concealing the wonderful results of curative mesmerism ; with persecuting and abusing the few brave men who have stood up in the face of obloquy, and sometimes of private ruin, to proclaim the truth. The modern developments of mesmerism that began at the end of the eighteenth century were mainly concerned with the curative side of the discovery, and the regiments of French books written at the time are almost entirely devoted to records of cures effected, and of the methods to be employed in carrying them out.

But the doctors of the period were furious. They were jealous, alarmed, and angry, and did everything they could to crush and discredit Mesmer and his followers. Poor Mesmer is one of the best misrepresented men of modern history. He was a good, though rather vain and excitable, doctor of Vienna, in the first instance, who accidentally—if there is such a thing as accident in this world—discovered that he could effect cures by means, as he thought, of magnets and influences proceeding from the hand. He associated this influence with the other (groping about rather blindly in the beginning for explanations of what he found to be occurring), and so called the influence “animal magnetism”—an unfortunate phrase which has lingered in use so long that one can hardly now get rid of it, though, really, it is entirely a misnomer. At once he was sneered at and ridiculed for suggesting anything so absurd as that—something with which the wiseacres of 1775 were unacquainted—so, hoping for a more liberal-minded *clientèle*, he moved

to Paris a year or two after the date just mentioned, and found himself out of the frying-pan into the fire.

Certainly he won over numerous converts to his belief. People, who themselves were cured of otherwise incurable maladies by his means, began to be more impressed by their own experience than by the assurance of their regular doctor friends that such cures were impossible. But the whirlwind of misrepresentation and abuse in which Mesmer lived bore down the evidence of those who benefited at his hands, and he was ultimately hunted out of Paris into poverty and obscurity, and ended his days curing poor people in Switzerland for nothing. Then his followers began to write books (I have shelves full of them), giving their own experience and testimony, and the regular doctors fought harder than ever to persuade the world that mesmerism was an imposture, and that if people were cured by it they were hallucinated, or, if not, "so much the worse for the facts."

Dr Elliotson, in this country a physician in good practice, was a dazzling exception. He came to know about the reality of mesmeric cures, and carried them out at a hospital under his control in the north of London. By this time it had been ascertained that mesmerism would sometimes render patients insensible to the pain of surgical operations. This was before the days of chloroform, when every operating-room was a torture-chamber. At Dr Elliotson's hospital, the greatest operations were carried out without the patients suffering pain. In one famous case, when a man's leg was cut off in presence of numerous witnesses without any suffering on his part, the achievement was made the subject of a solemn communication to the Medical and Chirurgical Society, and the members of that society were furious. They passed a resolution to the effect that the whole story must be false, because it was contrary to the known laws of Nature, and that even if it were true, it would be flying

in the face of Providence, that had ordained pain as a concomitant of surgical operations! I am not romancing. That resolution was actually passed by a body of doctors in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Elliotson was ruined as a physician, and the view of the Medical and Chirurgical Society triumphed for a time. Meanwhile, Dr Esdaile, at Calcutta, in charge of the principal hospital there, read about mesmeric cures, and being of opinion that there might be some things in heaven and earth not yet known to the Medical and Chirurgical Society, tried experiments. The results amazed him. He effected extraordinary cures by mesmeric means, and was successful to an equally wonderful extent in making patients insensible to pain during operations. He was so astonished that he took care to get many of the foremost Europeans in Calcutta to come and be present and bear testimony to these wonderful phenomena. His books on the subject give their signed evidence, but all this overwhelming weight of assurance made not a pin's worth of difference to the British doctor. That wonderful person had made up his mind that mesmerism was an imposture, and, therefore, any statement that seemed to imply the contrary must be false.

Then an amusing phase of the great discovery came on. About the middle of the century a Manchester doctor, Braid by name, who had been as fierce as any in denying the truth of mesmerism, accidentally witnessed some of its astonishing phenomena. He seems to have been in a dilemma. Mesmerism could not be genuine, because in that case he, Dr Braid, and his colleagues would have been proved wrong—an unthinkable absurdity; but it was embarrassing to go on denying possibilities which he knew, and other people knew he knew, to be facts. So he hit upon a clever way out of the difficulty. He imitated some of the simpler phenomena he had seen by methods, as we know now, very inferior to those

adopted by Mesmer and his followers, and gave the process so degraded a new name. He wrote a book, and said, in effect: "Mesmerism, as we all know, is an imposture, but I have discovered that there is a real force in Nature, which is *Hypnotism*, and that accounts for everything." The difference really between hypnotism and mesmerism is like the difference between a violin and an orchestra. One is a small part of the other, but so ready are people, in general, to go on repeating that A., B., or C. is an impostor if he discovers something far ahead of common knowledge, while D., E., or F. are men of science if they discover something only an inch or two in advance of common knowledge, that, to this day, careless lookers-on continue to think that Mesmer was a humbug, and that Braid is really the father of what is now at last recognised as a fact in Nature, though still very ill-understood for the most part—Hypnotism.

The real difference between the condition brought on by the methods of hypnotism, and that induced by the methods poor old Mesmer practised (without properly understanding them), is this: Hypnotism is a nervous paralysis brought on by certain strains the patient is instructed to apply, either to the nerves of the eye or in some other way. It is not an injurious state to be in. Sometimes it may even have the effect of making the subject insensible to pain, in others it may give the system a rest from which good results ensue as regards particular ailments. But it is a self-induced condition, and the only thing the "hypnotist" does is to tell the patient what to do. Now, the mesmerist produces the same result as regards the possibly beneficial nerve paralysis, but he does something else as well. He gives out to the patient something from himself—that fluid which Mesmer unfortunately called "animal magnetism," and that in some cases may be enormously beneficial to the patient. Of course, if the mesmerist is ailing in any way himself, his

"magnetism" (I use the word under protest, but one must call things something or other) is distinctly injurious; but if he is a strong, healthy person, it is *Life* that he is giving to the patient, plus any good effects ensuing from the rest to the system involved in the suspension of activities for a time associated with the hypnotic element in the process.

It would be tedious if I stopped to relate stories of cures effected by mesmeric processes within my own knowledge. I have seen a great deal of such work, and I *know* that, under favourable conditions, the most formidable ailments, like consumption and cancer, can be cured by mesmerism, not to speak of the many varieties of nervous disorder which some persons—halting half-way towards a proper comprehension of the subject—often fancy to be the only maladies for which it is efficacious. Anyone who likes to take the trouble can read up the literature of the subject, and store his memory with hundreds of well-authenticated cases. Esdaile's book, the many volumes of Elliotson's periodical, *The Zoist*, the voluminous writings of Deleuse and Puysegur, or the vast German encyclopædia of the subject for those familiar with that tongue, will satisfy the most voracious literary appetite. Of my own little book on mesmerism will be found to epitomise the earlier literature. But, for the moment, I can employ the present opportunity better than in repeating ancient history. I can give my readers a clue that may enable them, in some measure, to understand how it comes to pass that influences apparently so insignificant as "passes"—mere movements of one person's hands in front of another—can produce great and beneficial changes in the patient's system. Few people brought up in the materialistic beliefs of the nineteenth century can help laughing at a mesmeric process, if they happen to see it. They think it so ridiculous to suppose that any good can be done that way. They laugh because

they have not yet learned that more goes on behind the scenes of Nature than in front of the proscenium. But I must explain some of those unseen activities of which, as yet, I have made no mention, before the true inwardness of the mesmeric pass can be even vaguely comprehended.

What is the difference between living matter—the flesh of animals or the substance of plants—and that which, by comparison, may be called dead matter, the substance of metals and rocks? Of course, the differences are many, but one hugely important difference is this: A certain influence—let us call it a fluid—of a subtle kind, more subtle than the finest gas, pervades the living matter, and is altered in its character by the vital activities of animal bodies, especially by those of the human animal. It pervades the whole world, in reality, and is one of the many unseen radiations that come from the sun in the first instance, but it only becomes what may truly be called vital fluid when it has been absorbed by, and has been characterised in a certain fashion (I must speak vaguely unless I am to write volumes on this subject) by, the laboratory of an animal system. Of course, it is only the healthy animal that can do the work required. The unhealthy one is unable to digest, so to speak, as much of this fluid as he needs for his own continued life. The healthy person can work up a great deal more than he requires for himself, just as the bees make more honey than they really want for themselves.

Now, the first and simplest thing that happens with really good mesmerism is this: The patient is ill or dying for want of the vital fluid in question; the mesmerist has more than he needs for himself, and he bestows it on the patient by means of the passes that the ignoramus laughs at. For, like some of the elemental forces of which I have been speaking, the fluid in question obeys the influence of will,

and if it is the intention of the mesmerist that it shall pass from him and benefit his subject, it does so ! I have seen people in an enfeebled condition of health revive under the mesmeric influence, just as a half-withered flower will pluck up its petals if put in water. The process is as natural, as free from the element of the miraculous, when properly understood, as pouring milk into a jug.

But I do not say that mesmeric passes will affect everybody equally well. That is the weak point of the system. It is as real as a peal of thunder, but then there are people so deaf that they do not even hear a peal of thunder. I must go on with this subject a little further, and try to make it clear why some people are so sensitive to mesmerism that it is for them worth all the drugs in the pharmacopœia, while others are no more able to feel any effect from it than a brick wall would appreciate the touch of a friendly hand.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SENSITIVE AND THE "O.P."

WHAT is the difference between persons who can take up the mesmeric influence and those on whom it has no effect whatever? The fact that this difference exists is one of the reasons why so many people remain incredulous about the reality of the effects that seem to be produced on others. They declare, scornfully, "You can't mesmerise me!" and vaguely feel that, in saying this, they have cast grave doubt on the question whether there is really anything in mesmerism at all. It is as though some person, with no more ear for music than a cabbage, should go away from a concert, declaring, "You can't make me distinguish any difference between *God Save the Queen* and *Pop goes the Weasel*." If such persons as he were in the majority, then the possession by some of a musical ear would be laughed at and disbelieved just as, in the present state of common knowledge, the condition of "sensitiveness" to mesmeric and other influences of a similarly subtle character is laughed at by the Ordinary Person of to-day—the "O.P.," as we, who have to compare him very often with others more highly gifted, have fallen into the way of describing him.

I suppose few people are so little acquainted with the elementary facts of chemistry that they would be surprised to see nitric acid seriously affecting a silver plate, while it

produced little or no immediate effect on a plate of lead. The silver is sensitive to nitric acid, and the lead is much less so. With all the science of the Royal Chemical Society to help you, you could not come much nearer an explanation of that state of things than the phrase just used embodies. So, in reference to the more intricate problem why some persons can take up and be seriously affected by an unseen influence like that emanating from the hands of a genuine mesmerist, it would hardly be reasonable to expect that a fully satisfactory explanation could be provided. In truth, we can come rather nearer explaining why some persons are sensitive to psychic impressions—including those on the borderland of the physical and psychic planes—than we can account for the mysterious affinities of the chemical elements; but to content ourselves, in the absence of any perfect explanation, with analogies, I would point to the familiar fact that a sheet of aluminium is almost absolutely transparent to Röntgen rays, while a sheet of platinum is almost absolutely opaque. Both metals, to the eye or touch, seem equally solid and impervious to anything we put upon them. Or again, why should glass be quite transparent to ordinary light, and wood, a more porous substance, quite opaque to it? There need be nothing surprising, though there may not be any conditions quite explicable, in the fact that some human bodies are pervious to the mesmeric fluid, and some impervious to it.

As to whether there is or is not a fluid in the case at all, that can only remain in doubt, with the O.P., by reason of his unfamiliarity with the evidence on the subject. Great numbers of people—far more than those who can bear visual testimony to the reality of astral plane phenomena—can see the mesmeric fluid as it streams from the hands of a competent performer, and floats around the subject on

whom he is operating. In the middle of the century just past, Baron Reichenbach devoted himself to that particular research, and records experiments with over sixty people whom he found able to see the emanations in question, and a somewhat similar emanation that actually proceeds from physical magnets. People who deny the fluid "theory" of mesmerism might as well deny the north-seeking tendency of the compass needle. There is more evidence for that, certainly, than for the other fact, but there is adequate evidence for both.

How many per cent. of the present generation, it may be asked, are to be regarded as sensitive, and how many as O.P.'s? The embarrassment here arises from the wide varieties that are to be observed as regards the degree of sensitiveness of those who are not absolutely impervious to all such influences. In its higher forms of perfection, sensitiveness means a great deal more than the mere susceptibility of being benefited by mesmerism in ill-health. I am coming on to these wonderful conditions later, but keeping just for the moment to the subject of cures, these have to do with the lowest or slightest kinds of sensitiveness. People may be cured of serious diseases by mesmeric methods who would not be capable of going off into a trance, or of becoming insensible to pain under mesmerism. For always remember that sensitiveness is not a weakness, but a faculty. Not to be in any way susceptible of the influence is to have a relatively dull, leaden, or clod-like constitution. Unhappily, that is the condition of most of us at present, but I will show directly how very far it is from being the condition of some.

Before coming to that, however, it may be well to speak of the curious development in certain cases of a peculiar kind of sensitiveness that renders people able to benefit in ill-health by pilgrimages to special places. At first sight

there appears to be no connection between ordinary mesmeric sensitiveness and that aptitude for benefiting by the strange influences brought to bear on persons visiting such shrines as those of Lourdes in France, where it is undeniable that cures, thought to be miraculous, have sometimes taken place. In such cases there is no apparent mesmerism to operate. The patient goes to a place where it is popularly believed that some supernatural manifestation has promised a healing influence to those who shall seek it in a devout spirit. In Roman Catholic countries it is generally the Virgin Mary who is supposed to be the author of such promises. Anyhow, people go in full faith, and are in some cases cured of their afflictions, but not in all. What is the meaning of it? The explanation has to be sought partly in the sensitiveness of those who are benefited, and partly in the agencies behind the scenes, which then take the place of the mesmerist.

The problem brings us into relation with the benevolent side of what I have been talking of so much lately—elemental influence. Never mind what may be the real originating force animating the benevolent elementals concerned, the *force* has been actuated somehow, and then the result follows for any persons who are in any degree sensitive. They may think the result due to a direct interposition of Providence. Their restoration to health is really as much due to the operation of natural causes as though they had been mesmerised back to health, or had been successfully treated by purely physical means. And, difficult though it may be to follow the train of causation, the same thing, with modifications, has to be said of those cases in which cures are effected by the people who call themselves by the doubly-inappropriate name, "Christian Scientists."

It is utterly foolish to ignore the dazzling results these

people sometimes obtain, however little their proceedings may seem to fall within any definite category of intelligible mesmeric method. I know of half-a-dozen cases in which serious internal troubles, for which ordinary doctors could prescribe nothing short of formidable operations, have been decisively cured by the Christian Scientists. Because such people often fail and take money for trying their best, the suspicious O.P. regards them as conscious impostors, to whom criminal penalties ought to be awarded. They seem to be working in the dark, and without any clear understanding of the conditions of sensitiveness, and so they do not know in any given case whether they will succeed or fail. But however tainted all proceedings of this kind become when mixed up with pecuniary interests, the rough and brutal behaviour the Christian Scientists are apt to encounter in cases of failure, are more discreditable to the intelligence of the period than their own highly unscientific methods are discreditable to them.

But now let us turn from the purely medical aspects of mesmeric practice to those of far greater interest for the student of Nature's mysteries, which link the phenomena of mesmerism with the inquiry into the loftier possibilities of human consciousness. Mesmerism is what one of the early mediæval writers on occult subjects has called "the Open Door to the closed palace of the King"—in other words, the easiest method at our disposal for investigating the natural laws governing the superphysical world. As soon as we find a subject of really fine sensitiveness, we are introduced to psychic phenomena of the most enchanting order. I will begin by describing a few of these that have come within my own experience. The possibility of rendering a mesmeric subject, once put into the state of trance, insensible to pain, leads us on to a very pretty and highly instructive phenomenon. Having put my subject into a

trance, and having shown her friends that she was entirely insensible to pain by running a needle into her arm without causing her to move a muscle or an eyelash, I have given the needle to one of her friends and have said: "Now, at your own discretion, prick *me* anywhere, and you will see *her* give the start." The result has come off precisely in that way.

By-the-bye, having used the pronouns "her" and "she" in the above statement, let me explain that the finer kinds of sensitiveness are more often found in women than in men, not, as the mistaken idea sometimes has it, because the woman is the weaker vessel, more easily dominated by another will, but because women, other things being equal, are the superiors of men in respect to the delicate faculties that are required for sensitiveness. It is a great mistake to suppose that the person who, in the ordinary affairs of life, may be domineering and obstinate, has a "strong will" for mesmeric purposes. He may be as feeble as a child that way, and a meek, submissive woman might have fifty times the mesmeric force. But again, it is not in the mesmerist that the conditions exist that are important in producing striking results. These depend, in a far greater degree, on the characteristics of the subject.

Well, in the absence of occult knowledge, I think it would be safe to defy anyone to give any plausible explanation of the needle experiment I have just described. But it falls into its place quite naturally when we have the advantage of considering it in the light of occult knowledge concerning the superphysical principles of the human constitution. The mesmeric fluid, spoken of above as emanating from the mesmerist and floating round the subject, is identical in its nature with the subtle essence that permeates the nervous system, and is, in point of fact, the medium of communication between different parts of the body and the brain. The O.P. physiologist thinks the

nerves themselves, that he can dissect out with instruments, are the telegraphic wires that perform this function. So, originally it used to be thought that the copper wire of an ordinary telegraph was the conductor of the electricity; but *Modern Views of Electricity* (see Dr Oliver Lodge's book on that subject) holds, rather, that the real channel of communication is the ether surrounding and interpenetrating the copper. I am inclined to think that the right view in regard to physical electric circuits, but assuredly the corresponding view is the right one in regard to the nervous system and the brain. Occult students call the subtle fluid in question (when considered in reference to this function) the "nerve aura."

Now, this nerve aura in a sensitive is very mobile. The mesmeric process drives it out and replaces it with the nerve aura of the mesmerist. The two auras are for a time blended together, especially linking the two brain systems. Moreover, by reason of the condition of perfect trance established, the soul of the sensitive has drifted away from the body, and exists outside that body—perhaps close by, perhaps a long way off; but that is another story—in the astral vehicle, or sheath, or body, whatever you like to call it. Now, the alien nerve aura in the subject's system forms a very imperfect medium of communication between her limbs and brain, and this is why she does not feel pain when herself pricked, but there is a very good conductivity in the mass of nerve aura connecting her brain with that of the mesmerist. So, when he feels a prick—in the hand, let us say—his own nervous system conveys news of that occurrence to his brain, and a simultaneous impression is instantly conveyed to hers. Her brain is affected exactly as it would be in ordinary life if her hand were pricked, and so she gives the start and, as I have seen in such cases, will make an automatic movement of the hand itself.

CHAPTER XVI.

PHOTOGRAPHING THE UNSEEN.

A THOROUGH examination of the higher phenomena of mesmerism might keep us on that subject alone for an indefinite period, so I turn aside to deal with another matter, wishing, if possible, to broaden the basis of my reader's thoughts concerning the superphysical aspects of Nature, instead of attempting to thresh out any one department of research quite finally before proceeding to consider another. The truth is that, in regard to occult investigation, you cannot deal with any one branch of the subject all by itself. Each one gears in with so many others, that one must have a general comprehensive grasp of a great many unfamiliar natural principles before thoroughly exploring any single line of inquiry. The facts I am going to discuss to-day are, in this way, closely entangled with many other phenomena, and with many important inferences concerning the constitution of the human creature, and thus, when properly appreciated, will pave the way for explanations that at first sight might seem to have little or nothing to do with them. But, independently of this, they are curiously interesting in themselves, and have the advantage of bringing some important truths home to the mind in a way which is impressive for all who attach importance to the idea that "seeing is believing."

Probably almost everybody who may read these lines

will have heard, one time or another, of what are called "spirit photographs." These represent, in a more or less shadowy fashion, beings, spirits, ghosts, or astral entities—call them what you like—that are perfectly invisible to ordinary eyesight. The simple reason why such appearances on a photographic plate are not overwhelming in their effect on popular incredulity is that such photographs can be very easily "faked," or fraudulently imitated. Nothing is easier than to dress up a living person in floating drapery, to give a momentary exposure of the plate with this imitation spirit focussed upon it; afterwards to use the same plate for an ordinary sitter, and so obtain the semblance of a ghostly form standing by his side. The value of a spirit photograph depends entirely upon the perfect *bona fides* of the whole operation. And innumerable private photographers, also spiritualists, have taken such photographs themselves, and, knowing that no improper trickery had been concerned with the results, have obtained photographs of spirit faces on their plates.

I suppose there are few professional photographers who, if they told the truth, would not have to confess that sometimes strange effects come out on their plates that seem to represent something "supernatural." But it would not be good, in the present age of the world, for an ordinary photographer's business that he should be supposed to dabble in such "uncanny" achievement, so, when the strange results come out, the ghost is treated as a defect of the plate, and is suppressed accordingly. However, unless the sitters or the photographer, or both, are mediums, such results are unusual. On the other hand, when the photographer is a medium, and lays himself out for the unusual effects, they are exceedingly common. I have seen an immense number of such spirit photographs taken under conditions that have made me quite sure they were genuine,

and very recently I have obtained a series under conditions that make any question as to their authenticity altogether absurd for me, and equally so for any other persons who are capable of understanding that I am telling the truth.

I went to a photographer who had been successful in obtaining several such photographs for friends, and, with his cordial concurrence, took precautions which put all possibilities of fraud, on his part, out of the question. I should like to remark that these precautions would have been unnecessary for my own satisfaction, first, because the honesty of the man and his sincere interest in the whole matter make his *bona fides* perfectly obvious to any rational person having to do with him, and, secondly, because I was accompanied by a lady of my own acquaintance, gifted with clairvoyant sight, who could see the spirits being photographed. But, in order that I might have an answer for people to whom I might be inclined to show the results, and who might not be able to attach importance to the ideas I have just expressed, I took my own packet of plates—purchased the day before at Whiteley's—went myself into the photographer's dark room, put my initials on the corners of the plates, and arranged them ready for use, saw the first put into the dark slide, and came out with it into the studio, sat, and afterwards saw the plate developed under my own eyes. It bore a spirit form, as did all the others used that morning, more or less completely. In two cases the faces of the astral entities are as clearly defined as if they had been physical sitters. In some the plates are marked with blurs of light, representing an unsuccessful attempt, on the part of some astral person, to materialise sufficiently for the purpose in view. The failures are as interesting as the successes, almost, for the student of these problems, as they help us to check our theories as to the way the effect is brought about—but of that, more directly.

Before going into theory I want to record a few more facts.

A lady of my acquaintance, wishing to obtain spirit photographs, arranged a series of private sittings with a few congenial friends; used her own camera, and, after a few failures, obtained some of the desired effects. But then a very wonderful development ensued. The spirit friends present said (for be it understood that in this case the sitters included some who were clairvoyant and "clair-audient," so that they could converse with the visitors from the astral plane): "Do not bring your camera any more. Merely sit in the dark with a photographic plate in your hand, and we will do the rest." Following these instructions, the lady used to take her plates to the *séance*, unfasten them in the dark, hold them by the corner for a minute, wrap them up again, take them home, and develop them in the ordinary way. Under these circumstances faces used to appear on the plates, together with a quantity of curious and unintelligible markings that covered the rest of each plate; but the faces are in all cases quite distinctly recognisable—in some cases as those of departed friends. I have a collection of prints from these extraordinary negatives by me as I write, and they are a defiance of what ignorant materialistic people call "the known laws of Nature." But, at the same time, they are facts, like Nelson's Column at Charing Cross, and human beings capable of reason have got to revise their views of Nature's laws accordingly.

Now the spirit photographs obtained with a camera like those of my recent series are produced in one way, and the photographs without the camera in another which is less easily explicable; but still I hope to give the reader a clue to the comprehension even of that process. There is really very little that is truly mysterious in the camera spirit photograph. But it has nothing whatever to do with

the method by which the unseen in astronomy is photographed. That process is one which should be understood by anyone wanting to understand the spirit photograph, only that it may be put aside as inapplicable. It is interesting enough in itself, and has given us knowledge concerning some phenomena of the heavens that could not have been obtained in any other way.

If you look with the eye at the constellation called the Pleiades, for example, you see a certain number of stars. If you look with a telescope, you see more; but, however many you see in either case, you do not see more by continuing to look. Now, take a photograph of the Pleiades with a short exposure, and the plate will show you much the same effect as the telescope, but the longer you let the camera look at the constellation, the more it will see. That is to say, the very faint light from small stars, or nebulous matter surrounding the stars that are not bright enough to be seen with the eye, produces an effect on the plate by degrees. The effect of the light on the sensitive plate is cumulative, and in this way we have come to know that the whole constellation called the Pleiades is surrounded by a wonderful nebula of colossal magnitude quite too faint to be seen by any telescope.

Again, there is another variety of the unseen that can be photographed on different principles. The peculiar kind of light called the Röntgen ray is not perceptible to the eye, because the vibrations of the ether which constitute that variety of light are too rapid and minute to suit the mechanism of the eye, delicate as that is. Everyone knows that there are sounds too shrill to be heard, and just in the same way—to put the idea paradoxically—there is light too bright to be seen. But the camera can see that sort of light. In other words, the sensitive plate can be impressed by it; hence we get our radiographs of people's bones and

all the other phenomena of X-ray photography. And hence also, for the matter is not more complicated than that, do we get our spirit photographs of the ordinary kind—those which are taken with the camera. The spirit may be in a vehicle of consciousness that is not of a kind to impress ordinary vision, and yet it may impress the photographic plate.

How, then, does it happen, an intelligent inquirer may ask, that we do not get superphysical effects on every photograph taken, since we are told that the astral plane is all around us, and the whole of another world always in sight if we could only see it? Just so, but the light emitted from, or reflected by, *astral* matter does not affect the plate. The spirit or astral entity who wants to get himself photographed—and nobody ever yet photographed a spirit who did *not* want to have his portrait taken—has to suffuse his astral body with matter of a somewhat different kind, in order that its shape and appearance may become visible to the plate. The matter in question is spoken of by students of occultism as “Etheric,” and it exists, though unseen by the eye, in the constitution of every human being. From the constitution of some it is very easily withdrawn by astral spirits who want to borrow it, and susceptibility to that sort of treatment is one of the attributes that go to constitute a medium. Such withdrawal is a weakening, enfeebling process, and that is why mediums often feel very much depleted and exhausted after *séances* at which materialising phenomena have taken place. The materialisation of the spirit sufficiently for the purposes of the photographer need not be carried nearly so far as that which aims at making the spirit actually visible to ordinary eyesight; all the same, it is still more or less of a strain, and spiritualists, generally, who do not study the science of their own experiences, are often foolishly reckless about strains of that

sort themselves—indeed, only one kind among many perils that beset the practice of mediumship.

I said the method of X-ray photography was the same as that by which we get the portraits of spirits. That is because the X-ray is really an emanation, from the “cathode” or negative pole of the electric circuit in a vacuum tube, of etheric matter. Ordinary science has not yet realised this fact, for in many ways it lags behind the knowledge gained by occult research; but such is the fact, and many other interesting possibilities of the future hang on to that fact. To see astral matter, a person in the physical body must have an altogether new sense developed; but to see etheric matter, it is only necessary for the present eyesight to be improved, as already it is improved for some few persons. The eye is an instrument of very varying capacity. This may be illustrated by an interesting experiment with the spectrum.

If we arrange things so that a solar spectrum—the rainbow-coloured band of light—is thrown on a sheet of paper or a screen, it will be found that some people can see colour beyond the violet tint visible to all. That is because the eyes of such persons are enabled to cognise vibrations of a higher order than those which are perceptible to the rest of us. Persons who can see a good deal further in the spectrum than others will probably be able also to see the Röntgen ray. That is to say, such persons have, in a greater or less degree, the etheric sight. When this is perfectly developed, the possessor of such a faculty can see through opaque matter of some kinds—of those kinds which the Röntgen ray penetrates—and are thus endowed with a species of clairvoyance, not of that kind which is the true clairvoyance of astral sight, but of a sort that seems very wonderful, nevertheless.

Now, as to the rationale of the spirit photograph taken

without the aid of the camera. To explain that, I must refer to a phenomenon almost as wonderful, but of which I have had abundant experience. It is possible for the few who not alone can *see* with the astral sense, but can make use of some of the elemental forces belonging to the astral plane, to produce writing on paper without the aid of pen or pencil. This is done sometimes at spiritual *séances* even, and is not understood in the least by the ordinary spiritualist, but it is done by a process called in occultism "precipitation." I have endeavoured to explain that on the astral plane thought is a creative power. Your thoughts, if they are sufficiently intense and clear, form images there which are perceptible to others. If you form a thought-image of the words you wish to write, and know how to materialise the image by means of etheric matter, you can condense it on paper. Nothing I can say here will enable anyone to *do* the thing, but many things we cannot do ourselves may, nevertheless, be intelligible as do-able by persons adequately gifted. Now, that which seems to take place when a photographic image is produced on a sensitive plate without the aid of a camera is analogous to the precipitation of writing, only the thing precipitated is not visible matter, but a chemical influence. The whole idea is extremely subtle, but there is the accomplished result lying before me, and the solution I have suggested seems the only one available if we want to do something more than gape at it as an inexplicable wonder.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DIVINING ROD.

I HAVE already made some passing allusion to a method by which persons, gifted with a peculiar variety of sensitiveness, are enabled to detect the presence of underground springs of water or metallic ores in a way which baffles the comprehension of the man in the street, and is therefore at once set down by that sapient personage to imposture. I now propose to deal with the subject more fully, and, with this end in view, shall avail myself very freely of the information contained in Professor Barrett's elaborate report on the divining rod addressed to the Society for Psychical Research.

This contains an account of no fewer than 140 cases in which the "Dowsers," as they are called in some parts of the country, have shown that they really have the faculty in question; and I may say at once that, though Professor Barrett set out on his investigation with a distrust of their pretensions, he emerged from that undertaking absolutely convinced that they are genuine exponents of some curious fact in Nature, the science of which he makes no attempt to explain. His inability to do this does not detract in the smallest degree from the value of the evidence he has collected. The stupid, commonplace way of dealing with new experiences is to deny their authenticity if we are not armed beforehand with the means of explaining them. The

intelligent plan is to accept facts, however bewildering, and if we are unable at once to explain them, to feel sure they rest on some natural laws of which, as yet, we are ignorant. We should pass them to a scientific suspense account, and await later developments of knowledge, instead of presuming to measure the possibilities of Nature by the resources of our limited acquaintance with her laws.

The routine adopted by people who find hidden springs with the help of the divining rod is not calculated to inspire confidence on the part of the ignorant looker-on. The water-finder arms himself with a crooked hazel twig or stick of V-shape, with an end projecting from the apex—a sort of two-pronged fork—and holding a prong in each hand, with the point of the V projecting out in front of him, walks slowly along over the ground to be searched for any hidden springs it may contain. Suddenly he feels an impulse in the stick to point upwards. All that the spectator sees is that he turns the stick upwards, and when the Dowser declares that it turned up of itself without any volition on his part, that same spectator, if he is of the stupid or “O.P.” variety, says, “Of course, the Dowser is lying.” But the man who wants to know where he should dig his well acts on the advice given, and practically always does find water at the place where the divining rod (in competent hands) has indicated its presence. The geologist smiles with superior wisdom. You get water, he says, by tapping a water-bearing stratum. If you get it by sinking a well at some given spot, you would equally get it by boring anywhere else in the neighbourhood. But the Dowser says, “You will get it here,” and then, going twenty yards away, says, “You will not get it here”—and experience proves him right, in spite of the geologist.

A good many of Professor Barrett's 140 cases illustrate this very point. It is manifestly impossible, in the compass

of such an essay as this, to go into them in detail. The report lying before me is a closely-printed volume of 280 pages, and anyone wanting to verify my summary of its contents can buy it for himself. There are cases recorded in which the wisdom of the geologist and the instinct of the water-finder have been pitted against each other. The water-finder has said, "Here you will get water!" The geologist has said, "I do not know whether you will or not, but if you do, then you will get it equally anywhere within a radius of twenty or thirty yards." The poor Dowser has indicated places within that radius where no water would be obtained. Wells have been sunk at both places, and the Dowser's predictions have been verified both ways. In one case the well backed by the geologist was constructed with all scientific skill, and it remained almost dry. The other, a mere hole in the ground not nearly so deep, was abundantly filled.

Some of the correspondents who reply to Professor Barrett's inquiries—he collected evidence from all parts of the country, and even from all parts of the empire—describe experiments they have tried with different exponents of the water-finding faculty. First of all, taking one Dowser over their land, they have privately taken note of the spots he indicated as favourable for well-sinking, and have then secured the services of another who knew nothing of the first man's visit. The independent diviners have always "pointed" at the same places, and sometimes a third expert has come to the same conclusions as two unknown predecessors. Some of the professor's "sceptical" correspondents—persons of conventional knowledge and narrow intelligence, who are too often found in the orthodox temples of every science—have, in a lofty spirit of superior wisdom, suggested "tests" to be applied to the "pretended" exponents of the alleged faculty; such as blindfolding them,

repeating the trial on a dark night, and so on. The methodical professor points out that among his 140 cases all the suggested tests have actually been applied—the blindfold and the repeating test, for example, “in cases 2, 6, 17, 25, 45, 69, 73, 74,” and so on with the others. He does not record any apologies tendered by his sceptical correspondents.

I must indulge in a few passing remarks on the use and misuse of the word “scepticism.” We should all be sceptics in the sense of being cautious not to believe open-mouthed all we are told. In some departments of orthodoxy scepticism of that sort is especially required. But scepticism properly understood does not mean specific disbelief, any more than Agnosticism properly understood means Atheism. The rational sceptic is the man who, in reference to any particular statement, has not yet had evidence that it is true—he may not care whether the statement is true or false—and then stands outside the subject in question as a professed ignoramus by choice. No one wants to find fault with him if he keeps up that character consistently—even if he should be sceptical as to whether Dickens wrote *Pickwick* or whether the Cape of Good Hope is south of the Equator. But when a man prides himself on being a sceptic, under the impression that to be so implies greater acumen than is possessed by people who, having looked into the matter in question, have come to definite conclusions, then scepticism is only another name for the foolishness which accompanies unwarrantable conceit; and when a person calls himself a sceptic in reference to any particular question, and, at the same time, takes up the attitude of specific disbelief, then he shows himself an ignoramus in a double sense, as he does not even understand his own language.

The sensitiveness which enables people to use the divining rod with success must not be thought of as confined to a small body of professional experts. There are, it is true, a

considerable number of diviners who make their living by the exercise of the faculty, but our painstaking professor shows that the faculty is not confined to any particular age, sex, or class in life. Amongst the successful operators in his long list are to be found a clergyman, a judge, a local manufacturer, a great many ladies, several gardeners, a quaker, a miller, little children, and a French court. As regards the ladies, I have no doubt that in every hundred persons of each sex taken at random, more women than men would be found to possess the faculty, just as we find women of finer sensibility, on the average, than men in almost every department of psychic perception. Perhaps the state of things foreshadows a time in the future when—psychic development having to do with powers as well as with faculties—

* women will come into possession of a strength against which the muscle of the male will be like that of the ox, a kind of strength entirely under the control of the superior creature ! In those days our masculine successors may involuntarily offer up a vicarious atonement for the offence of our tyrannical generation ; or it may be that the offenders and the sufferers will be the same entities in reality. But the further discussion of that idea would open out the subject of “ Re-incarnation ”—one of Nature’s grandest mysteries—and I must treat that subject with due solemnity by itself.

Professor Barrett, of course, discusses the theory of the divining rod, though, as I have said, he does not come within sight of any intelligible explanation. Like other members of the society he represents, he deserves immense credit for his painstaking accumulation of facts ; but he has not studied occultism as a science sufficiently to be guided in the right direction when trying to work out the rationale of such facts. He says, when endeavouring to form some theoretical conclusions : “ Few will dispute the proposition that the motion of the forked twig is due to unconscious

muscular action." By that he means that the diviner really turns the rod up at the place where water will be found, but does this under the influence of a mysteriously-acquired interior consciousness that the water is there—not because he is guided by his waking mind to do this. On the other hand, conscientiously recognising the significance of some of his own cases, the professor points out that "with amateurs like the Rev. J. Blunt, Lady Milbanke, and others, the forked twig not only rotates, but one limb is frequently twisted completely off by the force with which it is driven round and round." Evidently, in such cases, the theory of unconscious muscular action will not work at all. That theory, indeed, is little better than a stumbling-block in the path of the Psychic Research Society. It has nothing really to do with the "thought-reading" experiments which, in the volume before me, are quoted in support of it.

We shall probably get a little nearer an explanation of the divining rod if we take into account the old-fashioned phenomena which used to be called "table-turning" before that elementary branch of superphysical experimentation developed into spiritualism. People found that sometimes, when three or four persons sat round a bare table with their hands upon it, it would move about or turn round, though nobody present was playing tricks or pushing. Each person, in such cases, might know that he was honestly abstaining, but he was rarely able to feel sure of the honesty of the others. The orthodox "sceptic" swore that somebody must be pushing, and Faraday even thought he had disposed of the matter by constructing an apparatus to detect pushing; but the tables—indifferent to the annoyance they were giving to the Royal Society—would sometimes move when nobody was even touching them, much less pushing, and then orthodox lookers-on paid no more attention to the problem. They were offended.

For the table-turners themselves, however, gradually becoming spiritualists, the causation at work became partially intelligible. Something was derived from the "medium"—whoever he or she might be—which enabled an invisible being or beings to exert an influence on material objects. The tables did not turn "of themselves." They were moved by force of some sort, but it was not the muscular force of the persons seated round—except in cases of cheating, or when idiots among the sitters thought it amusing to play tricks. From those small beginnings all the physical phenomena of spiritualism arose. The invisible beings concerned became more and more competent to bring about startling effects, and the mere movement of heavy objects, without the contact of any human hands whatever, became the child's play of their pursuit. It may still remain difficult to understand every detail of the process; but, for that matter, it is difficult to understand every detail of the process when we light a candle. Is the chemical action that goes on in the wick the cause of the heat, or is the heat the cause of the chemical action? A score of mysteries lie further in the background. So with table-turning; but we do know this much—as we also know that by means of a match it is possible to light a candle—granting some ill-understood characteristic in someone present, *i.e.*, granting the presence of a medium—invisible beings can bring a physical force to bear on material objects.

Now, the plain inference from all this is that a force may be brought to bear upon the hazel twig which causes it to turn under the impulse of invisible beings, when passing over underground water, if the person who holds it is "medium enough to supply the necessary link between the astral and the physical planes of Nature." Is the purpose in view too trumpery or trivial to be worth the attention of an invisible being? If that question is asked, I can only repeat,

that in the realm of "elemental" agency we have to do with as great a variety of dignity—with a greater variety, really—than that (of a different kind) which we encounter in the physical world as we survey its creatures from the oyster to the man.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF SPIRITUALISM.

PEOPLE who do not make a profound study of occultism—the science of the unseen side of Nature—are apt to fall into some confusion of mind with reference to the practice and beliefs of those who, on the one hand, are concerned with that study, and, on the other, with the more familiar methods of spiritualism. I propose now to explain why the true occultist regards the methods of spiritualism with mixed feelings, recognising, of course, the great good it has done in rendering the survival of the soul after death a magnificent certainty for multitudes who were but vaguely impressed by religious assurances to that effect, but, at the same time, recognising the deceptiveness of appearances on the “Astral Plane” with which the spiritualist is in contact, and also the impossibility of obtaining from entities whose consciousness is focussed on that plane—as must be the case with all ordinary people for some time after death—any information concerning the wider realms of spiritual existence beyond. The mere spiritualist is too apt to suppose that, when his friend who has “passed over” communicates with him freely from the world beyond the grave, he understands the region in which he finds himself as clearly as we all understand (or think we understand) this region—the physical world.

It may seem, at the first glance, presumptuous of anyone who is still in the prison of the flesh, who has not even made

that step in advance that has been accomplished by the ordinary person who has passed over, to claim a wider knowledge than that step by itself can provide for; but the truth is—and that fact lies at the root of occultism considered as a science—that there is no impassable limit for human intelligence, and the way in which, for most people at the present stage of average human evolution, perception is limited by the physical senses, is merely due to the fact that their interior spiritual faculties have not been sufficiently developed to give their consciousness a wider range. A certain degree of clairvoyant power during life will render people still in the body capable of perceiving the astral plane, and those who, having “passed over” in the ordinary way, are tarrying there. A higher degree of such development will enable them to cognise the more truly spiritual realms of Nature beyond, and to see, while still in the flesh, far across the horizons which bound the view of the less advanced soul on the astral.

In talking of the way in which spiritualistic communications may often be quite misleading—when spiritualists ask their departed friends for information about the next world, I am leaving out of account, of course, the mere bogus messages organised by imposture on the part of sham pretenders to mediumship on this plane. That kind of imposture has, unhappily, been very abundant in the world ever since spiritualism began, and the more its realities are recognised, the more temptation there is for fraudulent pretenders to make money out of their dupes. But this sort of thing is merely the outer fringe of the spiritualist's experience. The ignorant inquirer is apt to be the victim of gross and vulgar imposture at first, or, if he sees through it, he may be foolishly apt to suppose that there are no genuine experiences awaiting him further on. But let us suppose he has been persevering, that he has at last found his way

into some earnest circle of genuine spiritualists who know the difference between true and false manifestations, and, for the rest, would be as incapable of playing tricks as a bishop would be of singing a comic song in a cathedral—what, then, are the dangers of his position?

First, however, let me touch on the blessing he may gain by means of the genuine communications he might receive under such conditions. I know of more than one family where the grief engendered by the loss of beloved relatives during the war has been alleviated, to an extraordinary degree, by unmistakably genuine communications received from the relatives in question by spiritualistic methods. Vast multitudes of people in touch with the realities of spiritualism have been comforted under similar circumstances, and in the same way, during the last fifty years; and this condition of things, coupled with the fact that all such persons have, by the same token, been rendered happy and confident in the assurance of their own continued life after the death of the body, is no small benefit among those which our generation has to credit to spiritualism.

Amongst a multitude of dangers, on the other hand, to which the ignorance of most spiritualists concerning the science of occultism cannot but expose them, is the risk that communications, perfectly genuine in so far as they really emanate from the astral plane, and are free from the faintest shadow of suspicion of having to do with vulgar imposture down here, may, nevertheless, be deceptive and not really what they seem. All spiritualists are familiar with the extravagances of entities whom they call "lying spirits"; who and what such entities may be, is, for most of them, a mystery they make no attempt to solve. They content themselves with the simple theory that there are good and evilly disposed persons on the "other side" as on this, and they often try to guard themselves from the

intrusion of the second sort by surrounding their sittings with prayer and other religious observances, the value of which I am very far from wishing to decry. But the deceptive resources of the astral plane are much more variegated than the simple theory about lying spirits allows for.

I know of more than one case in which people still in this life have, as they supposed, got into touch with friends on the other side, and have opened up communications that have expanded through years of spiritualistic intercourse. Events have at last shown that the whole experience was delusive. There has been no physical plane imposture connected with the matter at any stage, but none the less have the communications from A to Z turned out to be an astral imposture. In one case, a near relative of my own got news—by the usual clumsy methods of table rapping and tilting, but with only a few of her own family at work, and the *bona fides* of all unquestionable—of an absent son in a wild part of the world, who proceeded to describe the conditions under which he had been murdered. In a long series of *séances* at different places, with different mediums, and by different methods, the story was resumed and amplified, and only about a year later did it all crumble into ruins, on the arrival of a letter from the son in question, who, being a bit wild himself, like the country in which he was trying to make his fortune, had neglected writing to his relations at home all that time. He had never been murdered at all, and was quite unconscious of the tender interest his imaginary fate had inspired.

In another case, a lady received, through a medium, who was entirely passive in the matter, a written message from a German officer to whom she had been engaged, and whose death she had heard of by ordinary means. It was in German, a language the medium did not understand. Other messages followed at short intervals during a period

that extended to two or three years, and the lady never doubted the authenticity of these communications. In the end the German officer turned up alive, and in the hands of the police, having, by means of false evidence concerning his death, been successful in swindling various insurance offices in this country and abroad. The consequences of this imposture were very grievous in more ways than one, but the private details do not concern my readers. The question is, How are such extraordinary deceptions brought about, and by what kind of agency on the other side?—for, remember, that in both the cases I cite, as would be equally true of many others I might cite, there was no trace of physical plane imposture to simplify the problem.

A volume might be written on the development of various theories as to how such deceptions are brought about; but I must content myself with giving a few hints which can be followed up in the literature of modern occultism by anyone who may want to understand the matter more clearly. Conditions exist on the other side—on the astral plane, that is to say, for no such conditions would exist on the higher and more truly spiritual planes of Nature—under which astral “bodies,” to use a familiar but imperfectly appropriate expression, which have been abandoned by the real Ego which functioned in them at first, may become invested with a spurious kind of vitality by contact with the somewhat abnormal attributes of a medium. Such an artificial creation may then reflect back ideas suggested to it by or through such a medium, and the longer such exercises go on, the more completely it becomes saturated with the ideas generated by the spiritualists in contact with it. It becomes, in time, a complete reflection of the consciousness of the people (in the flesh) who fancy themselves conversing with it, when, in reality, they are merely looking

at the image of their own memories and fancies in an astral mirror.

Again, in cases where there is no false impersonation, the ordinary person on the astral plane after death is liable to be mistaken by reason of the way in which thought on this plane sometimes takes definite shape on the other. For example, in a private circle I had something to do with a little more than a year ago, we were talking to a departed friend of my friends, whose identity had been clearly established to their satisfaction, and, I believe, quite correctly. We were all anxious then about the fate of the Legations at Peking, and private matters having been disposed of, I asked him if he could see and tell us what was going on in China. With a solemnity appropriate to the terrible character of his story, he told us that all the Europeans had been massacred. He even gave us some painful details of the tragedy. The event showed that he had been completely mistaken; but is it necessary to suppose that he was telling lies? Not at all. The astral plane was, no doubt, saturated with mind pictures of massacre constructed by the imagination of people in the flesh who were dwelling, in thought, on all the horrible possibilities of the situation then pending. Our departed friend did not know enough (concerning Nature's mysteries) to be able to distinguish between the mind pictures of the kind I describe and the corresponding visions of the reality—those which, in the technical language of occultism, would be called “akasic records”—that might have been available for his observation had he better understood the conditions by which he was surrounded.

Most people—among those who have got beyond the contemptibly ignorant state of mind of those who imagine spiritualism to be a system of physical plane imposture—look at the subject only from the incarnate point of view.

How does the pursuit help, benefit, or console us? A question thus overlooked is, nevertheless, very important. How does it affect the departed entities who communicate? Only the very stupid outsiders object to the idea, on the ground that they would not like to be made to come and play tricks with the furniture after they were dead. No real spiritualist ever supposes that he can evoke particular spirits. None come but those who want to come. But does it do them good? Occult science plainly shows us that, in the majority of cases, it tends to do them harm, by delaying their progress from the relatively comfortless or unsatisfactory astral region towards really blissful spiritual realms beyond. But, on the other hand, it is easy to exaggerate the importance of such delay, and multitudes of people, after passing over, would be gladly willing to postpone the fruition of their post-mortem happiness for the sake of affording consolation to those who mourn for them down here. Gradually, as the science of unseen Nature comes to be better understood, it seems to me certain that there will be a great development of what may be called reasonable spiritualism. As friends pass over, we shall all get into the way of talking with them for a time. But both we and they, by then, will have come to understand the whole situation clearly enough to refrain from an undue protraction of that sort of intercourse over a long course of years. They will be able to find out when they ought to leave off dealing with the physical plane of existence, and their friends here will wish them God-speed, fully understanding that they are "not lost, but gone before."

That is, so far, very good. But as every light casts its shadows, so all enlarged possibilities of human advancement have their perils. The more people who pass over are enabled to realise that they can still play a part on the stage of physical life, the more some of them will be tempted to

do mischief, to revenge themselves, perhaps, on their enemies, to encourage in others bad habits to which they have themselves clung in life, even to prompt people still here to commit crimes, or to help those who are criminally disposed. And, by drifting into any of such evil courses, they will be doing themselves incalculable harm, for, amongst other points to be considered in this connection, be it remembered that the penalties for misdoing of any kind accrue to a person on the plane where such misdoing is accomplished, and it is a bad business indeed for anybody who allies himself to the evil principle on the astral plane.

But here I must pause and discuss that idea and others hanging to it as a separate chapter. These long protracted dissertations, indeed, must soon, for more reasons than one, be drawing to a close, but in connection with the use and abuse of spiritualism, there are still some important points to be emphasised ; while, before my pen is laid down, I must try and show how all studies of this kind converge on one great purpose—that of correctly appreciating the place in Nature we men and women of this generation now occupy in connection with the great scheme of human evolution to which we belong.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW NOT TO INVESTIGATE.

SOMETIMES with an honest purpose, and sometimes with a malevolent one, people who want, or profess to want, to investigate the wonders of spiritualism, organise test *séances* at which the spirits are, so to speak, challenged to produce their manifestations in spite of intricate precautions taken to prevent physical plane fraud. Nothing can be more important in connection with the investigation of spiritualism than assurances precluding fraud, but the new-comer to the subject is apt to invent precautions which not only preclude fraud, but also preclude the possibility of any genuine manifestations. An example of such blundering was furnished lately by a series of so-called "test *séances*" organised by a London newspaper with entirely negative results.

The incident may serve as a text for the discussion of the way in which the phenomena of spiritualism ought *not* to be investigated, and that may lead to the development of correct views on the subject amongst people capable of appreciating scientific methods.

The experiments in question appear to have originated in the indiscreet enthusiasm of certain spiritualists who had, no doubt, been impressed with the striking nature of the phenomena occurring in presence of their medium, and were inadequately impressed with the delicacy of the forces concerned in bringing those results about. They had,

apparently, seen complete materialisations of spirit forms during the trances of their medium, and knew that these effects had nothing whatever to do with her volition; so they assumed that no system of tying up or fettering her could make the least difference. Perhaps they may even have tested this for themselves, and have found that such arrangements did not make the least difference. So, with an eager desire to spread knowledge of the truth, they offered to conduct a series of "test" *séances* in the presence of a critical—possibly even a hostile or incredulous—committee. The proposal was taken up; the committee was formed; the medium was secured with an elaborate system of fetters and padlocks. She and everybody else concerned were made to change their clothes and put on garments warranted by the committee not to contain full-sized men in the pockets, and the *séances* were held—entirely without results, except in so far as the committee were of opinion (in which belief they were probably quite wrong) that the medium during the proceedings wriggled in her fetters and tried to get out of them.

Now, before going into the science of the whole transaction more specifically, I will suggest an analogical experiment to be tried by a party of fishermen who have caught trout by the basketful in some particular stream, and have met with friends who stoutly maintain that there are no trout in that water. The incredulous persons are to be allowed to prescribe the conditions of the "test" fishing, and they insist on having a brass band to play on the bank, several Newfoundland dogs to be employed in fetching sticks out of the water as long as the fishing continues, and the use of hooks weighing not less than four ounces apiece. With all these conditions faithfully carried out, is it likely that any trout would be caught? But, none the less, the *Referee*, if it had been presiding over the undertaking,

would have announced, at the conclusion, that the absurd story about trout being found in that stream had been finally disproved.

There is nothing strained in the application of this analogy to the corresponding experiment that has just been tried. The only thing that is wrong about it is that the forces concerned with a spiritualistic materialisation are still more delicately liable to disturbance, still more "shy," if we keep to the lines of the illustration, than the trout in the river. The fundamental blunder made lies in the disregard of the fact that human thought is itself an energy creating definite effects on the matter of certain planes of Nature. If a medium has the characteristics that are favourable to the production of materialisations, it does not matter a straw whether he or she is padlocked in fetters or not; but the ignorant people who attach importance to the fetters never stop to remember that they cannot tie up their own thoughts which are plunging about in the astral light just as the dogs in my illustration might be plunging about in the water. It has sometimes happened that definite results in spiritualism have been obtained even in presence of extremely critical committees. The account which Dr Oliver Lodge gave before the Psychic Research Society of sittings he took part in, together with Dr Charles Richet and others, when an Italian medium, Eusapio Paladino, was tested, may be taken as an example. But the precautions taken in that case were honest, and not aggressive—designed to make the persons concerned feel sure all was right, but not to express hostile antagonism to the whole undertaking on the part of opponents with self-conceit, pledged to the belief that nothing abnormal would take place.

Honest, open-minded scepticism may impede the acquisition of genuine experiences, but is not fatal to their acquisition. I have not paid much attention to the processes of

conversion that have gone on amongst the members of the Psychic Research Society, but the late lamented Frederick Myers was at one time a rank disbeliever in spiritualism, and ended his days with a devout faith therein that cleared all anxieties from his mind at the time of his death. Another person, whose aggressive incredulity led him at one time into really obnoxious behaviour of various kinds, has latterly been writing, I see, at great length in the publications of the society in question, to affirm the reality of the manifestations that have convinced *Him!*—a conspicuous example of one form of foolishness connected with the outer fringe of spiritualism—that of attaching immense importance to the particular experience that has at last convinced “Me!” For each of us separately, of course, our own experience is important; but writers like Dr Richard Hodgson, who have for a long while held out against belief, appear to think that, when at last *they themselves* are converted, that fact must have grave significance for the world at large. Each such person is merely one more unit added to the millions who have known all about the matter all their lives, and the other millions who are ignorant and prejudiced remain just the same as before. Perhaps every little tells. Even the Partington mop diminishes the volume of water in the Atlantic, and the conversion of Dr Hodgson may have its value. But these reflections are leading me away from the calmer scientific aspects of the problem before us.

As already indicated, the way not to investigate spiritualism is to take a brass band to your trout stream. The proper way to begin the investigation is to read, not to experiment, until you understand the subject you are dealing with. If you wanted to know something about chemistry, you would not begin by getting an operative chemist to stock a laboratory for you, and by mixing things together at

random before you even know the difference between sulphuric acid and chlorate of potash. There are half-a-dozen good old standard books on the subject that can never be displaced from their position as the first books all inquirers ought to study, no matter what masses of literature have accumulated round them since they were produced. I refer to Crookes's *Phenomena of Spiritualism*, Alfred Russell Wallace's *Modern Spiritualism*, Stainton Moses's *Psychography* (or, indeed, his works generally), and Zollner's *Transcendental Physics*. When you have read these books you will begin to know your way about. Then you can go to *séances*, and your thoughts, while there, will no longer be of the kind that trouble the water.

Let me give an illustration of what I mean by that last phrase. A friend who was concerned many years ago in spiritualism of a very high order, with three or four others, all of them people whose names have become known to fame since in various walks of life, was in the midst of a sitting once at which communications of an instructive and impressive character were coming forward. The conversation between the sitters and their spirit friends—not mere ordinary human acquaintances who had passed over, but beings of a superior order—had been going on smoothly for a time, as on many previous occasions, when suddenly they stopped abruptly. Nobody could make out why, till at last a cheerful voice came through a partly-opened window: "At your old tricks again!" One of their intimates of the "O.P." order, to whom spiritualism was a sort of a joke, had climbed up to their window "for fun" by a ladder. The creature meant no harm. He was too ignorant to be conscious of doing mischief, but he was playing the part of the Newfoundland dog in the trout stream even while he crept up unheard and quiet, and while his presence was not even suspected by the circle of earnest students.

But now let us suppose that a new inquirer has got beyond the stage of feeling that would render his mental atmosphere an impediment to manifestations. What is the proper way for him to begin practical investigation? We will assume that he has read enough to be quite beyond the ignorant attitude of mind, but he is keenly desirous of seeing things for himself—a most reasonable and laudable attitude—and is fully alive to the fact that imposture is rampant among professional spiritual mediums, and must be guarded against by persons who, not having the advantage of being on terms of personal intimacy with good private circles, may be driven to employ professional mediums. The blunder to guard against in that case is the prescription of conditions beforehand. You never can tell how these may operate to interfere with the mysterious forces you are wanting to bring into play. But, you may ask, are we to sit in the dark and blindly believe that proceedings which may be fraud are superphysical? By no means. Whenever the occurrences taking place are conceivably to be referred to fraud, let them have no effect on your mind at all, but go on quietly watching and waiting, and, if you do that, it will be strange indeed, and contrary to the experience of everybody else in whose footsteps you will be treading, if, sooner or later, something does not take place in reference to which you say to yourself, with a sudden shock of excitement, “Good Heavens, there is no imposture possible about that!”

Of course, the private circle—all, medium included, people of earnest purpose and high character—is the best to have to do with, and since I have been writing on these subjects, I have had many letters asking me to introduce the writers—though quite unknown to me—to some such circle. A friend of mine in a similar case has answered this way:—
• Suppose you belonged to a party of accomplished amateur

musicians, and you had been for years in the habit of meeting and playing string quartets together. And then suppose some stranger, who had been told that your playing was good, said, "Let me bring my fiddle and join in," would you welcome the idea? It would hardly be rendered more attractive, if, on asking the stranger whether he was a musician himself, he answered, "No, but I have just bought a fiddle, and I want to begin in good company."

In a few last words about the recent experiments mentioned above, let me deprecate the idea that I am charging the spiritualists concerned with ignorance of their own study in allowing themselves to take part in proceedings fore-doomed to failure. There have been rare cases in which the "elemental agency" concerned in the production of physical phenomena have been sufficiently powerful, and guided by a sufficiently energetic will, to overcome the impediments put in their way by fantastic conditions prescribed by ignorant incredulity. Of course, the hope entertained by the originators of the recent experiments was, that such results might ensue in this case; but they were running a great risk, and, as it has turned out, have been merely instrumental in confirming the ignorant incredulity they challenged.

In reference to all such failures, there is one thought bearing on the matter which occultists will appreciate, but which the mere spiritualist may not estimate at its true value. Can it be supposed that, in a matter of so much importance to the human race as its gradual introduction to a comprehension of the spiritual realms of Nature, Providential control is to be left entirely out of account? May it not be that, while absolute conviction concerning the realities of spiritual life is rendered accessible to persons spiritually ripe for such knowledge, the less developed majority of

mankind are hardly yet ripe to be benefited by having such knowledge forced upon them against their will? I am brushing the surface here of a very great mystery, but a hint on the subjects may illuminate some minds.

Thousands of experiences are being gathered in every day by persons in a mental attitude conducive to their reception, making the reality of the life after death a definite certainty, and to rendering the connection between this and other planes of Nature no less obvious; but none of these experiences are of a kind that can be handed about among prejudiced, hostile outsiders in a way that will forcibly break down their incredulity. Up to the present such demonstrations have *not been allowed*! I am not saying that, even if the recent experiments had been entirely successful, and if the committee concerned had given in a report accordingly, such a result would have been a demonstration of the kind in question; but I will illustrate my meaning by an anecdote.

I know of a small private circle of intimate friends, at which, besides intellectual communications of grave interest, dazzling physical phenomena have been produced, taking this shape:—Material objects, many of them big and heavy, have been brought to the *séances* of that circle from America. The possibility of the transport of material objects through space, and through closed doors and windows, is familiar to many spiritualistic inquirers; but the feat was accomplished with the circle in question on a gorgeous scale, and under conditions which made it quite certain for the persons concerned, that the things really had been brought in a negligibly short space of time from across the Atlantic. My friends tried to get their wonderfully obliging spirit friends to bring them a copy of an American newspaper of the day's date. This never could be brought. If it had been, it would have been a

demonstration for all the world of a kind it would have been idiotic to disregard.

It could have been taken round London and identified and initialled by hundreds of people before there would have been time to get a similar copy by post. The spirit-friends who were allowed to bring things, weighing the best part of a hundredweight, were not allowed to bring a paper weighing a few ounces. And they did not themselves know why they found themselves prevented. I asked for a simpler test, but still one that I had my doubts about. I provided two rings cut out of different pieces of different kinds of leather, and I asked to have them simply interlaced. The principal spirit guide thought at first, certainly, he could do that for me, but he failed. He wanted to see if the "power" was all right, and to test this, he brought into the room—by the marvellous process of disintegration—through closed doors, a scuttleful of coals that had been in another room.

The power was all right, but the rings would not disintegrate. If I could have had those rings joined—though the test would not have been quite so striking as the paper from New York—the pair would have been a portable phenomenon that would have been crushing to anyone with a scientific mind. It was not allowed. Does it seem absurd to recognise Providential intervention in human affairs in the midst of business as well as on Sundays, when it is good manners to pretend belief in a lot of things one ignores between Monday and Saturday? Anyhow, the study of Nature's mysteries is apt to make some of the Sunday beliefs assume a reality and significance they never had before, and to bring them into relation with the whole course of the week.

CHAPTER XX.

PALMISTRY.

I HAVE referred in some former chapters to the striking results that have been obtained in some cases by the practice of palmistry. The subject is before the world so frequently in these days, that it seems desirable to discuss it rather more fully before passing on to more exalted themes. I do not propose to add one more to the numerous manuals of palmistry available for the use of those who wish to become practical palmists, but I want to indicate what kind of knowledge concerning a person's health, character, and destiny can really be obtained by the study of the lines on the hand, and where all possibilities of that sort stop short.

The success of palmistry in attracting attention out of all proportion to its real importance as a branch of occult science is obviously due to the fact that almost everybody has a pair of hands, and quite everybody is interested in all that directly concerns him or herself. People who loftily affect to regard the whole thing as utter nonsense are eager, none the less, to put out a hand whenever opportunity offers, and have their "fortunes told," if only "for the fun of the thing," with mental reservations to the effect that the palmists are sometimes right by accident when they read in the hand that the possessor is remarkable for courage, generosity, and truthfulness, or for amiability, sweetness of

temper, and unselfishness, according to sex. In all ranks of life people grasp openly or surreptitiously at every chance of having their hands read, flocking to Bond Street for the purpose, or getting a consultation down the area for sixpence, as their station in the world may dictate.

The contrast between the actual practice of the present age and its conventional pretences is amusing in a high degree, but it is true, though in a sense very different from that in which the phrase is often used, that ignorance and superstition go hand in hand. Ignorance of the facts to which Nature's mysteries give rise leads to the silliest kind of superstition possible—that which makes the exponents of such ignorance believe in their own sagacity. In the ages of faith, no doubt, many beliefs prevailed which were superstitious in the common acceptation of the word, but a great many other beliefs that would now be classed as superstitious were really empirical conclusions from experience, and representative of a much sounder state of mind than that of the man who is vain enough to suppose that nothing can be true that fails to chime in with the knowledge, such as it is, that he happens to possess.

Palmistry is neither a system of chicanery and imposture nor a sure and certain method of divining the future. But every rational being who seriously looks into the matter will find that, beyond all dispute or uncertainty, some broad correspondences are to be traced between the shape and markings of the hand and the character, health, and general prosperity, or the reverse, of the person whose hand is considered. This ought not to be surprising from the point of view of anyone who has even a dim appreciation of the harmony that pervades Nature. Who is there who would not recognise some kinds of correspondence between character and external form? You see a man with a big square jaw and a well-set-forward chin, and you instinctively

feel that such a man has a certain force of character (whether it is a good or a bad force is quite another matter). If you are in presence of two men, one of whom has a high, broad forehead, and the other a head that slopes back directly above the eyebrows, and you are told, "One of them is a literary or scientific genius, and the other rather a commonplace goose," would anybody of the least experience of life have a moment's hesitation in saying which was which? "Ah!" it may be answered, "that is because the brain has to do with mental capacity; the hand has nothing to do with it." Is that so, or is it not more likely that we have not yet identified the harmony of Nature in respect of soul characteristics and the physique generally?

It is just as contrary to common sense as to the more precise teachings of occult science to suppose that the human soul in a body is like a doll in a box, the doll and the box having been made by different artificers without reference to one another. The materialistic view, as completely as the higher one, will suggest that the body and the soul are intimately related all through. The materialist would argue that the soul is the product of the body, and the occultist that the body is the product of the soul (in a roundabout way), but both regard the two as interdependent. And just because Nature always does her work so thoroughly, the reasonable inference is that every part of the body has some correspondence (if only we could detect it) with some attribute of the real entity, which it expresses on this plane of life. Nothing is more probable than that the hand—so variable in its attributes, comparing one hand with another—should be conspicuously related to interior soul characteristics.

Then we turn to experience. If, in any department of life, we find that a certain effect follows a certain cause, in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred, even if we cannot

say *why* it should, nobody of reasonable mind would refuse to recognise a connection between such cause and effect. Granting the presence of the cause, he would say it is about a hundred to one that such results will follow. That is the situation, pretty nearly, with the broadest and most elementary deductions of palmistry. You will rarely, if ever, find a mature person, who has enjoyed good health all life through, without a clean, well-defined line running round the base of the thumb. I do not know why that should be so, any more than I know why certain wave lengths of light give rise to certain colour sensations in my consciousness, but I know they always do. So with any very old person. You will seldom or never find such a person without a *long* line round the base of the thumb curving round towards the wrist, even if it be broken in places or crossed with various markings. So, when a palmist sees a long "life-line," as it is called, on a young person's hand, he says, "The great probability is you will have a long life," and if the line is very clean and free from certain markings, he will add, with equal confidence, "You will have a very healthy life." Again, you will seldom or never make mistakes with the line which in all hands begins at the top of the life-line or near it, and goes, or tends to go, across the hand. In persons below the general level of intelligence that line will be short; in persons of conspicuous ability it will be well-defined and long. In a young person some broad conclusions may be derived from the consideration of that line which will rarely mislead the observer.

Above this line there is generally one which crosses the hand underneath the little mounds at the root of the fingers, and this is called the "heart line." The indications it gives are nearly as precise as those of the other two, and the line which sometimes runs up the middle of the hand from the

wrist to the root of the middle finger (and is called the Saturnian) is very significant when clearly defined, but not often found in perfectly good order. That line has to do with the "fate," or destiny in life, and the reading of it is rendered difficult by a multitude of complications that will be found duly set forth in the various manuals of palmistry. Broadly, however, it may be affirmed that the hand of any old person who has had a brilliant, unbroken, continuous career in life, will be found to have a fairly well-defined Saturnian line; while those whose life has been troubled, irregular, unsuccessful (in the sphere to which they belong), will be found without any such continuous line. The interpretation to be assigned to its breakings or cross-markings will be given in some of the books one way, and in some another, but there is such a general correspondence in the experience of different students, that we cannot remain in doubt as to the broad fact that—for unfathomable reasons—there is a correspondence between the line in question and the character of the person's life.

I have to recognise that, in talking of the "character" of a life, I am using the word in a sense very unlike that implied when we talk of the character of the person himself. For the mere materialist the life is a succession of events, the general character of which can be talked of when they are over, but in reference to which it is inconceivable that they can have any character one way or the other before they occur. Therein lies the materialist's blunder, but to discuss it fully would carry us into the depths of metaphysics. Meanwhile, for the purposes of palmistry, it is not necessary to be metaphysical; merely to observe facts is enough, and the palmist argues, "People who have gone through such and such lives will always be found to have had hands marked, as regards the Saturnian, in such and such a way." Therefore, when he sees a young person's hand marked in

such and such a way, he says, "That person will have such and such a life." The prediction has no origin in any train of reasoning, but practice shows that in the majority of cases it turns out right.

The more minute predictions of palmistry are all derived from patient observation of innumerable cases. This study, be it remembered, is no affair of yesterday. It has been going on for ages, and while no writer on the subject has ever dreamed of penetrating the mystery involved to the extent of saying *why* this or that characteristic or event in life should produce this or that line in the hand, the palmists of all generations have been free from the foolish habit of denying facts, merely because they could not understand their rationale. One of my oldest books on the subject is dated 1671, and is described on the title page as "by Richard Saunders, student in Astrology and Physic," and the imprint tells us, in the quaint language of the time, that the book is "printed by H. Bragis, for Nathaniel Brook, at the sign of the Angel in Cornhill, and at his shop at the east end of the Royal Exchange." Old Saunders is still regarded by modern palmists as an authority to be greatly revered. Besides his general account of the significance to be attached to the main lines of the hand, the author proceeds to furnish us with a long series of diagrams, showing all sorts of unusual lines that may be encountered in some cases, and appends an account of what they mean. For example, certain lines "signify a man to be the cause of shedding his own blood with manifest peril of life." Another line "signifies a man shall inhabit out of his natural country, and shall die there, and by how much the greater they are found in the beginning the sooner, and the bigger they are in the end, so much the longer ere he die." In another case the signification is "hurt from four-footed beasts." In another, "a drunken bestial condition." The

palmists of Saunders's time were not, it would seem, so bent as his modern successors on finding complimentary meanings for the lines they examined. Indeed, the book before me is so very plain-spoken about the meaning of certain marks, that decorum forbids their quotation.

To be a competent palmist, a student must be saturated with a knowledge of all these purely empirical readings, and must have the faculty of balancing one against another. And it stands to reason that, in regard to the meaning of marks that only rarely occur, there cannot be so broad a foundation of past observations to go upon as in the case of the lines, which everybody has in one condition or another. Then, again, the determination, according to the rules of palmistry, of the *time* at which certain events marked in the hand as impending will actually come off is very difficult. On the life-line, if the indications in question are illnesses, time has to be reckoned from the top of the line downwards towards the wrist—the whole line representing the entire life, and portions of it corresponding fractions. On the Saturnian, where events affecting the career are to be recorded, the bottom of the line is the beginning, and the top, near the fingers, the latter period. Assuredly, there is “no sense” in such reckonings; only people who meekly accept the experience of ages, and have thoroughly imbibed all the accumulated records thereof, can read a hand and make predictions that turn out right in a proportion of cases, putting the theory of coincidence entirely out of court.

So far, I have dealt only with the kind of palmistry which anybody may learn to practise if he has the patience to study the books, and the capacity to keep their variegated contents in his mind. To do that is to accomplish a task far greater than learning a foreign language. But, after it is done, nobody will be really a first-fate palmist without a considerable infusion of the clairvoyant faculty. The

significations of the markings to be examined in a hand are so extremely complex, that it is hardly possible for anyone to interpret and balance them all correctly. But as a palmist with some clairvoyant faculty pores over his task, he gets impressions that prompt him to look for corresponding signs in the hand, and then he finds them, though otherwise it is almost certain that they would have escaped his attention.

I have left myself no room in which to discuss the contemptible imbecility of the present law affecting the practice of palmistry, but on that subject anyone, who has followed these explanations with any appreciation of the sound natural truths that underlie them, will be able to form his own conclusions.

CHAPTER XXI.

OCCULT POWERS.

It is immensely important for anyone who wants to obtain a clear insight into the variegated subjects with which I have been dealing, to draw a sharp distinction between occult faculties and occult powers. Especially is it necessary to do this when we are talking of spiritualistic mediumship. One often hears people use the phrase, "a powerful medium," in reference to one in whose presence great and remarkable phenomena take place. To do the mediums themselves no more than justice, they rarely fall into the use of such mistaken language themselves, for they always emphasise the theory that all phenomena are brought about by the "power" of the spirits, they themselves being quite passive in the matter. In connection with mesmerism, on the other hand, it is not a misuse of language to talk of a powerful mesmerist, because there is an almost infinite range of possibility in that direction, and because the results of mesmerism, if it be genuine, are brought about by an energy emanating from the mesmerist. But nine times out of ten, or in a much larger proportion, when people talk of a powerful mesmerist, they are confusing the share in the result due to his energy with that due to the sensitiveness of his patient. The truth is, that very few modern mesmerists of the kind generally met with about the world at large have any *power* much worth speaking of. They may

all have some trace of such power, and the rest depends on the varying degrees of sensitiveness of the people they practise upon.

The distinction is very clear when once apprehended. The analogies of ordinary life make it intelligible. Sight and hearing are faculties obviously, not powers; muscular energy is a power, not a faculty. Going behind the scenes a little, the consciousness that is impressed by the senses of sight or hearing is a faculty; the will which brings the muscles into play is a power. Now, when we are investigating the mysteries of Nature, we are, for the most part, availing ourselves of faculties, existent either in ourselves or others, by which facts can be cognised that would not be perceptible to senses of the ordinary sort. But when we come in contact with occurrences of an abnormal kind, such as those continually met with in connection with spiritualism, then obviously we are in the presence of powers exercised by some person or persons either in the flesh or belonging to some other "plane" of Nature.

In the case of the spiritualistic *séance*, we are merely dealing, as far as externals go, with people, all of whom—medium included—are quite passive. The power exercised must, therefore, emanate from another plane. But at once we see that there is nothing unusual or extraordinary in that. Power generally does emanate, when you come to think of it, from another plane. Throw a cricket ball, and what has really happened? The ball is impelled by your arm, but what causes your arm to move? Your will, which is really a force belonging to the spiritual side of your nature. It belongs to another plane. And though the truth of the matter gets disguised in the mask of the commonplace, the mysterious force of will is constantly acting on otherwise inert matter to produce effects. The muscles are not alive in themselves. They do not act without the impulse

of a force from another plane in any one of the thousands of movements they make every day.

But can the will control any other sort of matter besides the muscles and the other activities of the body? In all the experience of spiritualism the volition exercised comes from beings on another plane of Nature, and the passive spectators get into the habit of thinking that, while "the spirits" can do almost anything, spirits still in the body—ordinary living people, that is to say—can do nothing in the way, for instance, of controlling physical matter, except by means of their muscles. It is the great failing of spiritualists, as a body, that they will not take the trouble to reason about the phenomena they are constantly observing. By their own hypothesis, the movement of physical objects, and the still more wonderful passage of matter through matter—of a blade of dry grass through a table, for example, which a friend of mine has seen accomplished in the light—is accomplished by spirits who were once ordinary human beings like themselves. Why is it that A., B., or C., who could not make ~~even~~ a magnetic needle alter its position by his mere will in life, is no sooner "dead" than he can work miracles in the way of causing heavy objects to move without the contact of physical muscles?

In a vague sort of way the lookers-on assume that in "spirit-land" he has learned to do things he could not do in life, which, in a certain sense, is true enough; but the answer only restates the question, What is it that he has learned? Now, the first statement I have to make in reply to the question, Why cannot people still in the flesh move physical objects by their mere will without touching them? is that the question does not fit the facts. Some people can! The capacity to do this is enormously rarer than the attribute which renders some people mediums—in a condition to surrender to "the spirits" some of the invisible

constituents of their own organism which have to be made use of in accomplishing results that ordinary people might call magical. Certainly, such people have acquired their powers by the exercise, in the first instance, of a faculty. They are necessarily people who have the clairvoyant faculty which enables them to cognise the potentialities of the astral plane, by which alone they can manipulate the forces which, in connection with such undertakings, they want to bring into play.

Coming at once to concrete illustrations, I will describe some of the simplest of such achievements that first attracted my own attention to the stupendous problems of occult science. It is more than twenty years ago now, since I first made the acquaintance of a very remarkable person, who has been the subject of more complicated misunderstandings all round and in both directions than anybody who has ever lived before, I should think—the late Mme. Blavatsky. I had previously seen a good deal of spiritualism, and was familiar with many such phenomena as I have been talking about in this book, but I had obtained no intellectual satisfaction along that road, beyond the immensely important assurance of continued life after death, and I had not contemplated the possibility of powers analogous to those exercised by “the spirits” as being within the grasp of people still in the flesh. But, from the first day of my acquaintance with her, though herself restrained at that time by embarrassments afterwards removed, she made it clear to me that her will could influence physical matter.

The simplest evidence of that state of things had to do with the production by her, at will, of the sounds known as spirit-rapping. The stupid argument of the disbeliever in old days used to be: How can a sound, which is a mechanical vibration of the atmosphere, be set up by any

non-mechanical intangible agency? We who knew that the thing occurred could not say how it was brought about; only we knew it did happen, and we also thought we knew that the unintelligible result required the co-operation of some being out of the body. This idea Mme. Blavatsky showed me to be a mistake. She could make those sounds occur at any time or place without moving a muscle. I was enabled to test this capacity of hers scores of times, in all the ways I could think of. To detail the circumstances of this investigation would take up too much time now. They ~~was~~ all minutely described in a book I wrote a year or two later, when the experiments in question had been eclipsed by a great many others of enormously more important significance. That book was called *The Occult World*, and therein the subject I am now dealing with can be studied more at length. And here let me remark that the long series of wonderful phenomena described, of a kind wholly unlike those of spiritualism—in that they were the product of embodied human will—have never been shaken, even as regards their evidential value, in any of the storms that have since raged round Mme. Blavatsky's name.

Other and wholly different phenomena, with which I have had nothing to do, have been challenged as regards their authenticity; but I can afford to pass all that by with absolute indifference. A certain famous inquiry, conducted with a stupidity that was itself phenomenal, and of which the results were swallowed by the Society for Psychical Research with a gullibility to match, has left uncritical bystanders under the impression that somehow Mme. Blavatsky's wonder-working has been exposed. Not only is that not the fact, but the most important wonder-working with which Mme. Blavatsky was ever concerned—that which is described in *The Occult World*—has never even been seriously attacked. Ridiculed? • Yes; but, given an

adequately grovelling wit, and anything in heaven or earth can be ridiculed. My statements of fact have never been seriously challenged, and as for the inferences to which they lead, these can be drawn as reasonably to-day as twenty years ago.

Summed up briefly, those inferences are that, granting an adequate faculty of clairvoyance on the astral plane, so that you can study the nature of the forces available there, and see what you are doing, you—that is to say, a qualified human being still in the flesh—can exercise powers over matter belonging to the order that used to be thought magical. It is, for example, within the power of such persons to accomplish such feats as I have described in talking of spiritualism—to disintegrate physical objects, transport them to a distance, and reintegrate them there, so that, in effect, a person possessing this power could possess himself practically of anything he coveted—the gold in the cellars of the Bank of England, for example—without stirring out of his arm-chair at home.

And having given that rather full-flavoured illustration of what occult power might enable a man to accomplish, it may begin to dawn upon the minds of my readers why the Authority that rules the world should, at the present stage of human evolution, and in the present condition of human morals, think fit to put some impediments in the way of the acquisition of occult powers. If they were easily acquirable, the social life of modern communities would be thrown into ghastly confusion; for life, as well as property, would be insecure,—the power which, employed in one way to disintegrate matter, could just as readily be turned to the commission of murders, which Sherlock Holmes himself would be no more competent to detect than to find out who might be responsible for an earthquake in Japan. The curious part of the story is, that the total eclipse and dis-

appearance out of the ordinary world of all traces of occult power only dates back to the beginning of the very advanced civilisation of which at present we are so justly proud. In the dismal middle ages some remnants of occult power actually lingered in the ordinary world, handed down from remoter civilisations—indeed, from that Atlantean civilisation of which I wrote in one of the earlier chapters of this book, in the faded and ignoble shape known as “witchcraft.” The comical prigs of current culture think witchcraft was all nonsense because they cannot now reproduce it. And yet Lecky admits that the evidence for the reality of witchcraft is overwhelming. He, indeed, adduces the absurd conclusion that this shows the fallibility of human testimony. It is proved, as far as testimony goes, that witchcraft existed, but we know that it is inconsistent with “the known laws of Nature!” So everybody concerned must have been a victim of hallucination or telling lies! No funnier phrase has ever been coined for the amusement of those who can see beyond the aspects of Nature unveiled by the senses, than that delightful expression about her “known laws” that I have more than once had occasion to quote.

The safeguard of humanity from the premature diffusion of occult powers is to be found in the fact that, under the operation of laws as difficult to disregard as those belonging to the known order, no one, at the present state of evolution, can obtain the knowledge which invests anyone still in the flesh with those powers, unless he has given assurances that cannot be misunderstood either by himself or the higher authorities concerned, to the effect that he is morally incapable of using such powers for evil or for merely selfish purposes. The reader must be referred to the literature of modern occultism if he wishes that statement elaborated more fully, but the main idea I am anxious to leave on his mind for

the moment is the distinction with which I began between faculties and powers, and the corresponding distinction between spiritualism and occultism. I do not want to run down or decry the interest, and for many people the great value, of spiritualism as a pursuit, but it leads merely, and by the hypothesis can only lead, to personal familiarity with some of the phenomena of the astral plane, or, in rare cases to some familiarity with the conditions of existence on higher planes. Occultism, on the other hand, aims at the acquisition of such interior conditions and knowledge as may promote the growth, within the man himself, of conditions bringing with them occult power. And yet the power is not the object of pursuit. Is that a paradox? At all events, it is not a very difficult riddle to read. The powers come as the consequence of a certain advanced condition of spiritual evolution, and with them come into consciousness a higher set of motives for action than any related to the physical plane of life. Then a spiritualised science begins to merge into a scientific religion, and horizons widen before the mind in all directions.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PURPOSES OF OCCULT STUDY.

THE study of all the manifold varieties of natural mystery with which these essays have been concerned would still be interesting even if we remained, at the end, blankly wondering at the strange energies working behind the scenes ; but, happily, that study leads to a great deal more than the vague conviction expressed by the familiar phrase that recognises more in heaven and earth than is dreamed of in commonplace philosophy. Certainly that acknowledgment is the first step towards the better understanding of our place in Nature, and hence the importance of getting people to realise the genuine character of many abnormal phenomena. Nineteenth-century science has been unfavourable to the appreciation of such phenomena, and no true occultist complains of this, because the growth of that science has been supremely important in educating the human mind to think with exactitude. But now that a new era has begun, the mental powers thus acquired must be turned to other aspects of Nature, besides those which have to do merely with the forces of the physical plane. From the study of super-physical mysteries, when these have once fairly forced themselves on the attention, the highly-trained faculties of the mind—evolved by the exercises of the nineteenth century—will discover amongst these mysteries the clue to the comprehension, not merely of much that has hitherto seemed

inexplicable, but also of the deeper mystery which lies in the background—the scheme of natural law which regulates the development of the human mind itself.

Nothing is more persistently forced upon our thoughts, as we observe the phenomena of the higher spiritualism, of the mesmeric trance, of sensitiveness to psychic impression of all kinds, or as we weigh the evidence of those persons able to cognise places and people at a distance from their sleeping bodies, than the broad fact that consciousness is not—as some materialists of the past century would endeavour to maintain—a function of the physical brain. All who have had the opportunity of observing the beautiful processes of mesmeric clairvoyance will appreciate the fundamental truth that human consciousness must have its seat in something that is distinctly separable from the body, not only when death puts an end to the activities of the brain altogether, but during life as well. During waking life, indeed, the brain is in intimate relationship with the thinking faculty, but it must be regarded as an instrument on which the real thinker is playing—not as the thinker itself.

Every religion that has talked about the soul has vaguely implied this, but most people who seek to understand a statement before they grant it their belief are discontented with the idea of a disembodied consciousness which has, so to speak, no vehicle in which to dwell. Occult science comes to their relief. It has discovered other orders of matter besides those that can be seen and touched by the physical mechanism of the body, and it has become familiar with the fact that every human being is furnished by Nature with vehicles of consciousness, or bodies constructed of these higher orders of matter. To the appropriate senses of people more completely developed than most of us, these higher vehicles are fully visible, and it is in them;

not in the physical body, that consciousness truly resides.

During the waking state these higher vehicles are intimately blended with the vehicle or body specially appropriate to this plane of existence. Indeed, it is just this blending that constitutes the waking state. Perhaps anyone approaching the consideration of such thoughts as these for the first time, will suppose that it is only in the case of abnormally-gifted people that the higher vehicles of consciousness can take flight from the body without danger to life, and return to it from distant wanderings. The truth is, that every human being quits his body during sleep. Getting out of it is the act of going to sleep, though physiologists have, quite accurately detected some physical changes that take place concurrently in the brain, and have erroneously fancied that these changes constitute sleep. It will be convenient to use a technical term here, and to concentrate our attention on the vehicle of consciousness which it describes, therefore we will talk of that in which the consciousness of every human being in sleep goes "out of the body" as "the astral body."

People may ask how it is that we do not all remember our flights in the astral body, as some few gifted persons appear to do. The occultist is not at all embarrassed by that question, any more than the gymnast would be puzzled if asked why one person can climb a rope hand over hand, while another could hardly support his weight that way. The muscles of the one are better developed than those of the other. The higher vehicles of man are the product of evolution like the physical frame, and they are of much slower growth. The race is very far, as yet, from having reached perfection of form, even on the physical plane—though the ground plan of the perfect physical form has by this time been fairly well sketched out—but the higher vehicles are not nearly so far advanced, except in a few

cases (few, that is to say, in relation to the enormous population of the earth). Everyone who understands the matter can do a great deal to stimulate their growth—indeed, it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that they can only grow when people understand the matter, and set themselves to help the evolutionary law—but at present, as the race has been developed so far, the astral body is not much more competent to enjoy and work with the opportunities of the sphere of Nature in which it exists, than the physical body of a baby in arms would be able to make use of the gymnast's appliances.

At one stage or another of all such inquiry, people will be sure to feel that it is all very unfair on those who are born amongst the undeveloped majority—not provided by the law of evolution or Providence—whichever phrase we like to employ—with astral bodies capable of conscious flights through higher regions of Nature. Why are we set to accomplish our little run through earthly existence at a period of the world's growth, when it seems we are not half able to enjoy the opportunities this same world will offer to our more richly-endowed successors? This cry is only, in another form, the same that has so often arisen from the hardly-used bulk of humanity in reference to the inequalities of well-being amongst the children of men on the physical plane. Is it not terribly unfair that one should be born rich and another poor, one healthy and another diseased, one in the midst of conditions that lead to a life of honour and distinction, another in surroundings that conduce as surely to a life of crime and penal treatment? The question brings us to the very heart of the magnificent spiritual discoveries which the study of occult mystery has unveiled for our reverence, our admiration, and our consolation in this world of trial and suffering.

For less teachable generations than our own, religion has

answered these pitiful appeals by giving assurances that somehow, in another world, all such apparent injustice would be remedied. There the poor and the downtrodden will be compensated by boundless happiness; there the rich man will be denied entrance to "the kingdom of Heaven." Sometimes the rich man has objected that this system would be as unfair as the other, if he is to be kept "eternally" in an inferior state hereafter merely because he has had a better time than his neighbours for a few years on earth; but, meanwhile, he has consoled himself by never really believing the story, while the sufferer has clung to one half of it, at all events, with touching fidelity. And, in truth, the occultist does not want to dispute the broad principle that, in states of spiritual happiness succeeding this life and enduring for very long periods of time, the victims of the world's inequality will find such ample compensation for temporary hardships that these will seem very unimportant in the retrospect. Occultism, in reference to heaven, merely puts a definite complexion on the condition of the after life, rendering states of existence, which were unintelligible before, plainly harmonious with a scientific view of Nature.

But it does a great deal more than this. It shows us that, even on this earth, in the long run justice will be vindicated in every case, for every man and woman now living is merely going through *one phase* of earthly existence. He or she will come back again and live here again, and then again and again through a long vista or series of lives; always the same soul, the same centre of consciousness in all the different bodies it may come to inhabit as the ages advance. Will it not be seen how the mind is prepared to comprehend this idea by the fact, already discussed, that the soul, the consciousness which *is* the man in any given life, is not a function of the body going on at the time, but something quite separable from and independent thereof?

Nothing worth keeping is destroyed when the one life ends. The person dying—as hundreds of observations by those who can range the astral plane show—is very often unable to realise that he is dead. He feels just the same as before, until he gradually begins to perceive that he has come into possession of new faculties that he did not possess before. He is simply on the threshold of a new life, and the experiences of that are variegated and prolonged beyond anything that ordinary imagination is likely to suggest. But, eventually, after ages have elapsed, the man, so to speak, dies out of the spiritual condition, and becomes once more immersed in a vehicle of physical plane consciousness—that is to say, he is born again on earth, it may be in quite different surroundings from those of his last life, and passes through another phase of earthly existence. • •

The profound truth, which, on reflection, will be seen at one stroke to answer most of the riddles of the painful earth, is known to occultism as the Doctrine of Reincarnation. It has been explained by theosophical writers, myself among the number, over and over again, with full detail, during the last twenty years, but it is difficult to eradicate some misconceptions on the subject from the public mind. Thick-headed people, like a blunderer who fancies himself a critic of oriental ideas, in a volume, mainly of rubbish, called *Asia and Europe*, scoff at the reincarnation idea, because they say it is impossible to imagine human beings becoming animals. Every writer on reincarnation has carefully explained that the old-world notion called “transmigration,” which embodied the idea of a relapse to animal incarnations, was the mere caricature of the true doctrine, put out by people who had not fully grasped it in ancient times, or found themselves constrained to disguise it. The law of reincarnation is not a provision for backsliding on the scale of creation, but, on the •

contrary, for progressive evolution. Every new life is a new opportunity for the soul, or "Ego," as we sometimes say, to advance his own moral and intellectual development, and it is, to all intents and purposes, through the efforts of such lives alone that advance is possible. But without going fully into that branch of the subject—for I can do no more at present than sketch the outlines of the great truth—it is important to recognise that, though there can be no retrogression in successive rebirths as regards the kingdoms of Nature—once a man always a man, till, in some inconceivably distant future, something better still may be possible—at the same time, the environment or surroundings of each life in turn must be the accurate expression of the soul's desert.

According to the way in which the opportunities, whatever they were, whether great or small, of the previous life were availed of, so is the character of the next life defined. In rough language, everyone gets, in his or her next life, just the sort of treatment that he or she has deserved by action in the previous life, and this is the way in which the law of reincarnation, with its sublime companion law, which determines the circumstances of each new incarnation—the law of Karma, as it is technically called—provides for the perfectly fair treatment, in the long run, of every member of the human family.

To avoid the continual use of a double pronoun, let us call the soul "it." Its station in life each time it reappears on earth, its bodily health, the happiness or unhappiness it encounters in its relationship with other incarnate souls, are all results of its Karma or action in the last or other by-gone lives. And be it remembered always that different souls are of all imaginably different ages. Some of those around us, as we walk through a London street, have begun their career as human beings millions of years before others; and, to the eye of the occultist, the great masses of the

poorer population — with a very minute percentage of exceptions due to peculiar Karma—are the younger members of the human family, doing, for a time, its rougher work. We have all been through the same mill in by-gone ages, even if we are promoted to other sorts of work in the current life, and for all who are honestly and courageously doing whatever work has been set for them this time by Nature's decree, promotion is as certain in the future as the growth of a healthy seedling into a plant.

Another point of immense interest to be remembered is that, in the long run, the soul has an equal experience of both sexes. Complexities of the law, which it is impossible to go into here, determine in each case, as it is entering on a new life, whether that shall be a male or a female life. But let it not be supposed for one instant that the one is superior to the other as an opportunity of accomplishing evolutionary growth. Both kinds must be experienced by the soul, in order that it may be prepared for ulterior destinies of perfection.

Leaving the immensely important thoughts that have been developed in the last few paragraphs to germinate in the minds of my readers, I must now, for the present at all events, say good-bye to them, very sure that in many cases I must have started them on lines of investigation and discovery that will do them more good, in the long run, than as yet they foresee. The advance guard of the human race in civilised lands stands really at a critical period of evolution, and the grand results of the future depend for each of us, in turn, on the extent to which we come into conscious relationship with the answers to those riddles which Nature's Mysteries present for the education of the higher faculties of mankind.

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